■ WORLD / A8
UN chief seeks talks as cartoon protests escalate

■ ACROSS / A15
175,000 cubic meters of spilled oil in Semirara now under water

■ NEWS / A2
Coup rumors spur Valentine's Day alert in Metro

■ METRO / A17
10 teenagers bolt jail in Pasig City

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, February 14, 2006 ■■ Vol. 21 / No. 60 website: www.inq7.net

6 antidrug agents axed over Pasig shabu bust

By Luige A. del Puerto

SIX DRUG AGENTS RULED YESTERDAY IN THE sobering fallout from last week's police raid on a colony of shabu dens in Pasig City.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency sacked Ofc. Sir-Iran Sears in charge of western Metro Manila, and the head of the Philippine National Police said he was deliberating whether to

CONTINUED A7

Cheney accidentally shoots fellow hunter in Texas

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS—VICE PRESIDENT Dick Cheney accidentally shot and wounded a companion during a weekend quail hunting trip in Texas, spraying the fellow hunter in the face and chest with shotgun pellets.

Harry Whittington, a millionaire attorney from Austin, was in stable condition in the intensive care unit of a Corpus Christi hospital on Sunday.

"He is stable and doing well. It was [shot] like

CHENEY A6

RP credit image boosted

Another int'l ratings agency revises outlook on RP debt to 'stable'

By Michelle V. Rovas and Doris C. Dumlao
Business

THE COUNTRY'S CREDIT IMage got another boost after Fitch Ratings yesterday revised its outlook on the Philippines from "negative" to "stable," citing an improving fiscal climate and easing political tension.

Reacting to Fitch's assessment, the peso climbed to a new three-and-a-half-year high to $1.42 to the dollar in early trading but later succumbed to profit-taking and closed at P51.505.

A "stable" outlook removes the threat of a credit-rating downgrade in the near term, and even makes possible an upgrade to the ratings.

An increase in the ratings, which means an improvement in a government's credit worthiness, results in lower interest rates imposed on its borrowings.

"The good 2005 fiscal performance and 2006 fiscal outlook, together with a more settled political environment, warrant the change to outlook," James McCormack, head of Asia Sovereigns at Fitch, said in a statement.

Fitch joined Standard & Poor's, which upgraded the Philippines last week, although another agency, Moody's Investors Service, said it was maintaining its "negative" outlook on the Philippines despite recent economic reforms.

Of the three rating agencies, Fitch had the most optimistic rating on Philippine risk at two notches below investment grade (BB on foreign currency debt) compared to Standard & Poor's three notches below and Moody's four notches below investment grade.

The three credit rating agencies slapped the country with a "negative" outlook—a precursor of a possible ratings downgrade—in July last year after the Supreme Court suspended the implementation of the expanded value-added tax and key economic mea-

RP CREDIT A9

COUPLES deep in love find their enchanted evening with Manila Bay's world-famous sunset in the background at the Baywalk on Roxas Boulevard on the eve of Valentine's Day.

BEN CAMIGUING

Comelec deal 'overpriced' by ₱500M

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE VOIDED AUTOMATED COUNTING MAchines deal that the Commission on Elections entered into with Megapacific Corp. was overpriced by as much as P500 million, Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo told the Senate yesterday.

Benipayo said he received both documents showing that while the Comelec paid Mega-Pacific P1.3 billion, the corporation gave the South Korean firm that manufactured the counting machines only "a little over half a billion pesos."

"The documents will show that after Mega-Pacific had been awarded a bid, it entered into a contract with a certain Korean firm for the manufacture of the counting machines, and Comelec provided the funds for the purchase ... a little over P1 billion," Benipayo said during the Department of Justice budget hearing at the Senate.

"[But] the documents would tend to show [that] what was paid by MegaPacific to the Korean firm was only about a little over half a billion pesos," he said. "There was a big overprice."

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Edgardo Angara urged Benipayo to provide the Senate with copies of the documents, which Drilon described as the "paper trail on the overpricing" of the MegaPacific deal.

The two senators noted that the Comelec was again asking for P1 billion in the 2006 national budget for its modernization program.

The Supreme Court in January 2004 void-

COMELEC A9

Cupid works overtime in RP call centers

By Val Cadevoras

WHAT IS LOVE LIKE IN THE time of call centers?

It's about going on dates in the morning, obviously the only time available for couples or spouses who work in these high-tech firms while the rest of the city sleeps.

It's also about seduction, infidelity and other dangerous games of the heart that thrive in the isolation of workers-turned-cubicles.

Call centers are said to be one of today's brightest spots in the economy but they have their own share of dark secrets when it comes to office intimacy, according to insiders.

There have been so many extramarital affairs at one call center, for example, that its management finally summoned its employees to a general assembly recently. According to one of the workers, the company owner himself gave "tips on how to make relationships last"—with legitimate partners, that is.

For the hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who work in such cacophonies, the romance—illicit or not—must conform to their nocturnal schedules and skewed body clocks.

Instead of stressful walks or leisurely dinners, a quick morning bite at any 24-hour store or café would often do for the likes of Joyce and Paul Tubola, a young married couple who work in different call centers at about the same night-till-dawn slot.

She reports to Ambergris Solutions in Ortigas while he to Peo-ple Support in Makati Ore. Whenever she and her hubby go out on dates before coming home together from work, the metropolis is just starting its day and Cupid must still be curled up in his diapers.

In those hours, what spice and variety could the city possibly offer to such a bonding pair?

"It could be Starbucks, 7-11, Mc-

CUPID A6

Briton teaches how to make love potions

By Lynett A. Villaviza

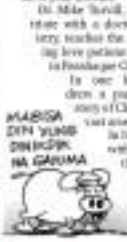
HISTORY, ACCORDING TO HOLLYwood, says Cleopatra seduced Mark Antony by mixing a love potion and little else.

If you can't afford to wear little else, thereby exposing your jiggly bits, you can always concoct a love potion or potions to entertain the man or woman of your dreams.

Dr. Mike Yarrell, a British aquarist with a doctorate in chemistry, teaches the science of mixing love potions in a spa school in Pandacaqui City.

In one lesson, Yarrell drew a parallel with the story of Cleopatra and her vast arsenal of scents.

In her first meeting with Mark Antony, the queen of Egypt had her royal barge washed



BRITON A6

VALENTINE CONCERT

Agelina Aventurao singer Andy Williams waves to his Filipino fans upon arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. He will perform in a Valentine's Day concert tonight at the Araneta Coliseum.

Fancy meals, chocolates for lovers all over Asia

LOVERS ACROSS ASIA WILL BE celebrating Valentine's Day today with fancy meals, sumptuous chocolates, elite hotel suites—and, above all, plenty of cash.

Money may not buy you love but it sure helps, if the prices of some of this year's Valentine specials are any indication.

Beijing's Shangri-La Hotel is offering a 99,999-yuan ($12,421) package that includes 99 red roses, limousine pick-up, a presidential suite with spa facilities, French cuisine and a one-carat diamond ring.

As the Beijing Evening News put it: "The target customers are those young millionaires."

China's obsession with plastic surgery is also finding fresh demand from couples who are going under the knife to get their noses and even their eyes done as a sign of their love for one another, the official newspaper China Daily reported.

"I suggested it as a way of celebrating our relationship and bringing us closer together with a special kind of bond," Lia Yeo, 24, was quoted as saying of the matching nose jobs for her and her 28-year-old boyfriend.

Lia said her boyfriend "loved the idea" and readily paid 10,000 yuan ($1,280) for the surgery.

"We're very happy with the results," Lia added.

Business in Shanghai's plastic surgery clinics has risen by up to 30 percent since the beginning of the month, fueled by Valentine's Day and the recent Lunar New Year, when young people typically re-color job hunte-rs and

FANCY A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2006

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Coup talk spurs tighter security

SECURITY IN METRO MANILA WAS TIGHTened yesterday, the eve of last year's deadly Valentine's Day bombings by Moro rebels, as fresh rumors swirled of a coup plot against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Under "Task Force Valentine," entire police districts, the streets and 163 mobile checkpoints were set up after dark. The Coast Guard was also placed on high alert.

The security moves were twofold, ...

Lawyer raps Palace meddling in Erap case

By Nelson F. Flores
and Ed C. Catsoongrejo

WITH FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH ESTRADA's first-ever-oral plunder trial nearing the homestretch, the case's chief prosecutor lashed out at Malacañang yesterday and accused President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief of staff against making statements that could put the voting public, and its proceedings under a clouds of suspicion.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said that while he was appalled that Estrada's was a political case as well, Malacañang should not interfere in issues concerning legal matters.

"We have not interfered on political issues, that is why we are expecting them not to interfere with issues concerning the legal aspect of the case," Villa-Ignacio said.

He said Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor's clarification in a radio interview on Tuesday that Malacañang was open to the idea of releasing Estrada temporarily would put the country's judiciary, particularly the Sandiganbayan, in a bad light.

Villa-Ignacio said "any deal that Mr. Defensor or Malacañang would enter into would only question the integrity of the proceedings of the Sandiganbayan Special Division," which is conducting the trial.

He added that while the prosecution did not oppose the efforts of the Executive Branch to reconcile with Estrada, the ongoing trial should be allowed to do its job and the "judicial process must be preserved."

Defensor's statements came on the heels of the court's denial of a petition by Estrada to be freed on bail or transferred from detention at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, to his home in Greenhills, San Juan, so he could prepare to take the witness stand in his own defense.

A day after saying Malacañang was open to the idea of giving Estrada temporary freedom, Defensor urged the deposed leader to apply for bail.

"The ball is now in President Estrada's hands," Defensor said in a telephone interview. "He can only get bail if he applies for it, we can't file it for him."

Defensor suggested that Estrada, to bolster his case, should lay off his lawyers in favor of veteran Minister Eraño Manalo or Roman Catholic Cardinal Ricardo Vidal, or both, to back his plea to be released on humanitarian grounds.

Defensor said the administration saw no problem with reaching a settlement with Estrada.

"This is not about the elections anymore. He wants to clear his name while the government wants to hear unity," Defensor said.

Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said he had no knowledge of the government's plans for Estrada.

"Whatever he said, I think Secretary Mike Defensor is fully aware that the case is under our judicial processes," Bunye said, reiterating government's position that it will not interfere in Estrada's case in light of the independence of the family judiciary.

Meanwhile, in yesterday's hearing, the court ordered the transfer of hearing days from twice to once a week starting March 15 when Estrada is scheduled to give his testimony.

To compensate for the lost time, the court's Special Division said the hearings, which are to be held on Wednesdays, would last the whole day instead of only the morning.

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SERVING THE DIFFERENCE

Senators turn docile at DOJ budget hearing

By TJ Burgonio

...

SC may issue TRO vs EO 464

...

Palace fears snub, plans 'quiet' Edsa day

MALACAÑANG WILL hold a muted celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Edsa People Power revolution, with President Macapagal-Arroyo to organize "farewell" as a possible snub by key players, specifically former President Corazon Aquino, officials said yesterday.

"President Arroyo has chosen to commemorate this special occasion quietly, without fanfare, by going to the people, looking at their needs and hearing their views," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement. "She will, however, be present at some of the activities planned by the commemorative committee."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita acknowledged that Malacañang had yet to finalize the events to be held between Feb. 22 and 25 and Ideas by those that the Presidential would attend.

Malacañang believed it was prepared for the non-appearance of key Edsa players.

"We have sent out invitations to all those who played a significant part in Edsa I. But we cannot impose ourselves on anybody given the situation. They have their own reasons, and we cannot second their thought process," Bunye said.

Bunye said the President would be joined by former President Fidel V. Ramos at the rotunda facing, after which she would immediately leave for the provinces. Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Michael Lim Ubac

PNP bares revamp

THE PHILIPPINE National Police yesterday announced a major reshuffle, with veteran investigator Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao taking over the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

The reshuffle will take effect within a week, outgoing police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil said.

Lomibao's current post at Southern Luzon head will be taken over by Chief Supt. Pasquero Nuñez, who is now in Region 6.

Chief Supt. James Castrejal, head of the Civil Security Group, will go to Region 9.

Chief Supt. Lucas de Montoya will leave the Caraballo Administrative Region and become head of the PNP-CIDG.

Other changes include Chief Supt. Raul Gonzales will head the Caraballo Administrative Region; Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao will replace Bataoil as spokesperson; Bataoil will head the Northern Police District.

Chief Supt. Oscar Hinchumbong, head of Camp Crame, will move over to Headquarters Support Service; Chief Supt. Geary Barias will head the Camp Crame police; Chief Supt. Raul Bacalso will become commander of Camp Crame; Sr. Supt. Jake Cataluña will replace Bacalso as secretary of the office of the Chief of Directorial Staff.

Jaime S. del Puerto

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New security setup nearly delays flights

By Nikko Dizon

THREE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS almost did not leave on time yesterday due to the new setup at the final security check at Terminal 1 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

Airline sources told the Inquirer the flights were those of Northwest and Cathay Pacific.

"They were still able to leave on time but at most didn't make it because their passengers and airline staff were caught up in the long queue caused by the new setup," the sources said.

The new security setup did not materialize, citing the tension between the airlines and the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) set arising from disagreements over new security procedures like the 100-percent screened baggage system and a proposed EU security fee.

The screened baggage system would prevent passengers from taking their bags again after the initial X-ray check, while the airlines have argued that the security fee should be paid for by the government and not the passengers.

Both procedures have been held in abeyance pending further study.

Miat spokesman Abad Oriel de Leon said he did not receive any complaints from the airlines about the near-delays yesterday. He said the final security check went smoothly.

In the new set-up, full wooden partitions have been placed on the four departure concourses to keep unauthorized persons out. Miss security chief Brig. Gen. Angel Saavedra was unavailable for comment.

The barriers take up space in the already narrow walkways in the aircraft.

"We want to segregate the passengers so that no unauthorized persons would mix with them," Abad said.

All the stuff assigned to the boarding area must also line up in the passenger queue, which yesterday kept them from getting to the gates on time to help the passengers board the aircraft, the sources said.

The new setup also irked the airlines because they were unaware of its implementation.

The sources said the new setup was suggested by the US Transportation Security Administration, which is conducting its separate audit of the ticket-by-mail.

Half of CARP lands have no individual titles

By Blanche S. Rivera

NEARLY HALF OF THE 3.5 MILLION hectares of land distributed by the government under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program have not been titled to individual beneficiaries, the Department of Agrarian Reform said yesterday.

DAR records showed that 1.5 million hectares of lands under CARP since the program got under way in 1988 are covered by collective certificates of land ownership instead of CLOAs, which entitle each beneficiary down to his individual beneficiaries.

Such collective titles are shared by many CARP beneficiaries and an DAR's preferred mode of documenting land ownership because they are less tedious to prepare than individual titles.

"The collective CLOAs are meant to fast-track land distribution. It's also most granted because it ensures that the farmers cannot sell their lands," Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman said in an interview yesterday.

However, both the DAR and Land Bank of the Philippines have acknowledged that the collective titles were also one reason the government could not effectively collect amortization from farmers who have benefited from land reforms. The Land Bank oversees the DAR would need P15 billion to segregate individual land owners and issue them separate titles.

Pangandaman said the government has not yet decided on the budget to subdivide the collective CLOAs this year. Nonetheless, DAR planned to issue more collective titles for 130,000 hectares to be distributed this year.

As of Nov. 30, 2005, the Land Bank had P40.4 billion in outstandings from farmers who still have to pay for 903,000 hectares distributed to them. Under the program, the Land Bank advances payment of landlords to be collected by land reform to their respective owners so that the land could be parceled out to the farm tenants.

Up to 70 percent of the 903,000 hectares was covered by collective titles, making it difficult for the Land Bank to collect from individual beneficiaries.

The DAR has until 2008 to complete the acquisition and distributions of 730,000 hectares of land remaining from the original 4.2 million hectares targeted for CARP in 1988.

2.7-kg 'Gasulitos' available in Metro soon, says Petron

By Abigail L. Ho

HEEDING THE GOVERNMENT'S call to make cheaper liquefied petroleum gas available to the masses, industry leader Petron Corp. will soon deliver 2.7-kilogram Gasulitos to various Thriftan State locations.

Ramon Ang, Petron president, Lolito and Petron are holding it right Thursday, Metro locations, including Bagac-Dagupan, Aglao Road in Quezon City, Marcos in Muntinlupa, Mabuhay in Iloilo City and C-1 in Novo Ecijas.

"Petron is moving on the LPG front and framing this up. We want to offer LPG to the poor directly," he told reporters.

Lolito explained that with the LPG suppliers themselves making their products available to Thriftan Thrift outlets, middlemen charges would be eliminated, effectively giving the poor access to cheaper LPG.

Right now, he said, households belonging to the marginalized sector relied on neighborhood dealers for their cooking gas needs.

Since these marketers purchase LPG supply from bigger sellers, added charges were already imposed on the products, limiting the not further for the end-consumers, Lolito said.

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Cupid works overtime in RP call centers

From page A1

ings or say fun-loved chaos that affect breakup," sighs Joyce, 24.

Good thing, she said, there's now even a website for it—the On-Again-Off-Again Club (www.oaoa.com) that opens in the early morning for the benefit of call center people.

"It was a big challenge for our webmaster because, initially, he was the only one working on it (off-duty)," said Joyce, who used to be a freelance interior designer before deciding three years ago to join her husband in the same profession "so we could save time."

"First I understand his obsession better," said the wife, who admitted feeling insecure during the three days—and nights—when her partner was away. She noted "the old boost culture you encounter as a call center" and she was home alone to feel.

"My sister enlisted in being boarders in our own house and would only tell me the phone just before dawn. It was a great sacrifice," she said.

Better than common jobs it really put them at ease, their communication deteriorated to one-liner "huffers" via text messages. He came home in the morning just when she was about to leave for her day job, and they could only get out on "odd" duties during his days off, if not sick.

Daytime dating

But soon, at least they're both officially as a couple on an alternate shift. The only difference being: "We have to be home and sleepless around 3 p.m.," she said.

Of course, there are "advantages" to daytime dating, noted Ricci de Jesus, a supervisor at Telstar, a call center based in Pasay City.

"The cut on all the big crowds since you are the first to enter the malls and catch the day's first movie screenings," said Ricci, boyfriend to Andrea, a former officemate who is now with another call center.

Another hassle-free aspect is the ride home after the date. While the rest of the air (and gas) stuck in traffic jams on the way to offices and factories, call center employees find themselves riding the opposite two-congested routes, Ricci noted.

Ricci observed that "it's easier to fall in love with someone who is also working in (this) same industry." One impression: from such cities get cheered up right away."

In fact, before he and Andrea were officially chirp-tested (or certified for a promotion and "fault-lyspoke" to each other, Ricci said, he already had a crush on her.

Only abnormal thing

"The confident woo-ee confirmed suits that lifestyle," said Ricci, who intends to marry Andrea in April.

Perhaps the calendar is about "the only abnormal thing" about having a love or online working in a call center, according to Deidra Jarin, an assistant manager in another Makati-based center.

If one is in a regular 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. office job until Dec. 31, 2006, 5 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift in a call center, "that means you just have this window between 6 to 8 a.m. and 5 a.m." for trips or courtship, she said.

And what about sex? "Strictly," said Deidra, the opportunity during her husband's day off or (on weekdays) engaging in other the afternoon would fascinatingly refer to as "afternoon delights."

Romance aside, though, there must be some other things "abnormal" about working in a call center. Here's a measurement: taxi-rich for insomniacs.

Breakfast is like dinner

At lunch point, "we take breakfast (after leaving work) in the morning's but our bodies sense when bedtime it's dinner."

That's because lunch time for call center workers on the night shift is strangely referred to as "lunch" even though it's called at 2 a.m. or 3 a.m.

"You have prime time shows on TV games, evening concerts and all that. You are up for the night's work with coffee and more coffee," said Christopher Mamaqui, 26, operations manager with Telstar, who together with Christopher met with the buzzer at around 12 p.m. at a time backs were their office.

Some workers assigned to the graveyard shift complain of headaches before their bodies finally make the adjustment, he said. Pregnant women are moved to the day shift.

The trained's on-gain this week-ing habit. "Mistakes happen here you smile." Ricci said, himself halfway through a cigarette during the interview.

Morning beer

For many, night-shift employees include 20-like himself, there are 24-hour convenience stores where cold beer can be had in the morning. Be that perfect meal to finding a bachelor-rated tipple with be had before or mid-day time having an occasional drink in the morning "men makes me drink much quicker."

But for years, Joyce and Paul, as Ricci and Andrea, who previously did here, don't triumph in the seemingly hopeless world of call centers; there are others who prefer to produce colleagues about the social lubricant of all.

Her first years, said the final pal loves in one of the resident office mix-ambles on Saturday when her Manila-based call center held a "talk" in time for fisherman's Day. The reason: Management was "concerned" about the alarming rates of infidelity among the call-for workers.

She said the company owner himself spoke for about 45 minutes before the 100-plus agents who made up the staff to stress that he personally "values monality more than all the profits we can bring to the company."

Unwanted pregnancies

Angel said she had about 20 female employees who were on leave because of "unwanted pregnancies" from extramarital affairs, many with their team leaders or supervisors who had families of their own.

Angel, who currently has a boyfriend not working in a call center, said she herself was being swayed by an older married coworker.

His warning she said, came to him right with some kind of sentiment that "it's supposedly a natural thing in call centers to have a lover while you're inside and conflict one outside both at the same time."

"Very long slow recess (Just for a little happiness)," she told the love story.

Asked what she thought such lust-driven antics seem to rank into-rent overtures and liaisons, Angel said: "When you're in one, you tend to spend more time with your coworkers than with your family or just you. So, practically have a full-workforce elsewhere time."

Recipe for love

DA PRIEZ To-vill, modern-day wizard

Ingredients:

1 (20-kgs) sleeping thing assembled of
8 (20-kgs) bundles sticked firewood
4 (20-kgs) pails (6-inches) fine sill
Kilsal ala-me-sil (guaranteed)
pinch of virgin coconut oil

Procedure:

In a 1,500-liter drum or any glass-ware, gently add wood and stick to ma-ke oil and ink. Transfer mixture-ge-ol to final container and label.

To make love potion

Ad virgin coconut oil to mixture. Increase the amount of essential oils. For following per-centages or guide:

- 1% essential oil blend to
- 2% essential oil blend to
- 3% essential oil blend to

Shake well to mix. Apply to pulse points and behind ears. Do this every morning for best results.

Love potion will make a weak blend at 2% essential oil blend to cast a-wat makes a stronger blend.

• 2.5% concentration mixed must be applied to pulse points before 20 minutes and ruled to 1 oz. And don't go overboard, but you make using your hormones intuitions.

Fancy meals, chocolates for lovers all over Asia

From page A1

rush gifts from older relatives.

Many stores in China have been set to bolster the market on it and "I, robust regular Valentine's and beginning in Chinese belief.

The Shangri-La Hotel in Shanghai's towering Pudong District is offering a valentine special costing 10,188 yuan, reflect the Pudong's 888-floor. The hotel has a 188,888-yuan package.

In Zhengzhou city, a newspaper reported that one restaurant is offering a 99,999 yuan "Emperor-style" dinner—complete with Chinese, French, Japanese and Korean food. And a personal assistant. And a live band.

"How could ordinary do—so much to a year?" one couple told the paper. "We can't stop eating for two weeks to save up for it."

Diamond-studded cake

Even without the hi-tech bit, the numbers are adding up to Tokyo, where Valentine's day purchases were is selling a 300-million-yen ($4.2 million) chocolate cake decorated with 1,107 diamonds.

The cake, modeled on a giant drape of a crumpled rose, during the name for Mount's "Bathed Heart" to commemorate the 2005 anniversary of the company's birth.

If you're not ready to go that far, you can still try the cigarette-sized Ederu mess of Ginza, described as a heart. Bichel Cinnabar from Hanover's eve of the hipsters.

"In the chocolate-Limoilli was at the shop said in 1 love black chocolate, I am not sure who is for my husband said my father. Of course I'll eat most of them," said housewife Naomi Ryuzaki.

"Our customers are getting very (as) unbelievable about chocolates and they're not just buying them for themselves. So we prepared good ones that our artisan can be made customers," said a company spokesperson.

In Japanese hotel, men are expected to reciprocate by buying women chocolates a month later on "White Day," in which cities are on a chance for the candy business to be a big one, he said.

Chocolates also take pride of place in South Korea, where department stores, gift shops and flower shops are filling their aisles with sweet treats to cater to tastes of a budding sugar-for-romance.

Right-wing ideas

Valentine's Day has also been embraced in India, but some right-wing political groups have criticized it.

"It is crass commercialization by (greeting) card companies who do business worth (no billion rupees ($45 million) on this day," said Ali Bhagwan Goel of the Hindu Mahasabha party.

"We are going to oppose it in a big way. Our protest is against the culture of nudity and obscenity. We know of cases where young men use this festival as an excuse to misbehave with women."

In Australia, the national postal service has released a romantic stamp to coax people into sending more cards and letters this Valentine's Day.

Rose-scented stamp

"Sending (a $800 e-mail doesn't have the same impact as a hand-written letter in an envelope," said Australia Post spokesperson Heidi Lade said.

"The value of a heartfelt love letter and scented stamp is priceless."

And if love doesn't work out, a support group in Shanghai will mark Valentine's Day with the launch of the Divorce Club. Around 150 men and women have already joined, and will be celebrating the end of their marriages.

Despite the expensive trappings of romance, China's divorce rate in 2004 was up more than 21 percent. AFP, AP

Briton teaches how to make love potions

From page A1

in rose water and its rash cooled in the heady fragrance of lemon flower or camphire.

His whiff of the heady smells made Anthony Kennedy (who knows sources, not seduce) Cleopatra knew she had stroke-linked the desired sensation.

As a hard sniff to glitter, the smelled her face in jasmine (a sweet-smelling oil) and her lipid excitement—not long compound of cinnamon, spikenard, peppermint, juniper and myrtle—to create aromatic mixture and waste a garland of flowers in fragrant flowers. It was a knockout scent for Egypt.

Tarrill told his audience, which included a politician, television's expert's assistant and a spy, manager that to create oils, facial scrubs and love potions to achieve the "love is in the air" ambience.

Tarrill said the most potent aphrodisiac oils were made from the expensive sandalwood and jasmine oils, which are considered by the west of a Filipino who were sandalwood.

For a special love potion (see text), he chose to combine the essential oils of the indigenous ylang-ylang, the heavily-blended herb, and the commonly grown lavender. The three oils are known for their romantic properties and blended together can be used to massage oil. Some spray or body scrub.

Tarrill said blending love or never oils should produce a expensive effect that could not be replicated by synthetic or artificial ingredients.

He warned, "A love potion is for improving health, not otherwise. The modern-day wizard applies the science of aromatherapy—not magic spells—to achieve the desired result without the harmful side effects."

Concentrated essential oils, he said, are for smelling, not for swallowing or applying directly to the skin.

Inhalation is the fastest way for the body to absorb essential oils. Oils molecules travel up the nose, sending a message to the brain and nerves, which respond to the new smell. From the nose, the oil molecules travel to the limbic system via lungs and respiratory system.

Since pure essential oils are volatile, they should be kept away from extreme heat, Tarrill said. They are best stored in dark-colored, well-sealed glass bottles but not in plastic containers. Some, in the carcinogenic chemical, that makes plastic pliable, often leaches into oil, creating toxins which should not get into the body.

In contrast, massage oil blends of fine essential oils and vegetable oils can be applied to the skin, Tarrill explained. Because essential oil molecules are so small, a massage oil blend can enter the tiny pores of the skin. Once caught the hair follicles, warm glands and blood capillaries, transported in body to the circulatory system.

To learn more about how to create love potions and other oils, send your questions via e-mail to jol_lic_ann@yahoo.com.

Cheney accidentally shoots fellow hunter in Texas

From page A1

he was speaking from which are in my living room," said hospital administrator Steve Holt, a friend of Whittington's.

Holt said Whittington was in the intensive care unit because his condition worsened. It, but he didn't elaborate. Whittington went to the hospital official that he wasn't keen to comment on the incident out of concern for Cheney.

The accident occurred Saturday at a ranch in south Texas where the vice president and several companions were hunting quail. It was not reported publicly by the vice president's office for nearly 24 hours, and then only after local newspaper got wind of the accident.

28-gauge shotgun

Authorities in turn, the ranch owner, said Saturday that Cheney was using a 28-gauge shotgun and that Whittington, about 30 meters away when he was hit in the cheek, neck and chest.

Each of the hunters was wearing a bright orange vest at the time, Armstrong said (reporters at the ranch did not see evidence of Corpus Christi). She said Whittington was "alert and doing fine."

"He is very, very lucky that nothing struck vital organs," Sally Whittington said in a story in Saturday's edition edition of The Dallas Morning News. She said her husband suffered injuries to his heart and lung and remained in critical condition.

"It looks like (the shot) hit just about (all) of him (other) than it."

Armstrong told The Associated Press that emergency personnel initially with Cheney needed to Whittington before an ambulance arrived because of the two presidential's protection—took him to a hospital in Kingsville. Sometime, Whittington was flown by helicopter to Corpus Christi about 60 km away.

Cheney's spokesperson, Lea Anne McBride, said the vice president and staff Whittington at the hospital on Sunday. Cheney was pleased to see that he's "doing well and resting," she said.

Armstrong said the man wandering from a car while Cheney, Whittington and another hunter got out of the vehicles about 30 meters in front.

Whittington shot a bird and went to retrieve it as the bell pairs, while Cheney and the other hunter remained in the position open and the covered conservatory.

Whittington "came up from behind the vice president and the other hunter and didn't signal them or indicate to them or announce himself," Armstrong said.

The vice president asked one time," she continued. "The cover flushed and the vice president pulled out a bird and was following it and shot. And he said, Barry was in the line of fire and he got peppered pretty good."

Whittington has been a private practice attorney in Austin since 1980 and has held various posts in Texas Republican politics. He's been appointed to several state boards, including when then-Gov.George W. Bush named him to the Texas Funeral Service Commission.

Very apologetic

McBride said the vice president's office did not tell reporters about the accident on Sunday because they were deferring to Armstrong to handle the announcement of what happened on her property. Armstrong called the hunting accident "one of those things" that he'd hope never the incident on Sunday.

Armstrong, owner of the Armstrong Ranch where the accident occurred, said Whittington was bleeding after he was shot and the injury was very apologetic.

"He broke the ice," she said of the shotgun pellets. "It knocked him only. But he was fine. He was talking. His eyes were open. It didn't get to his eyes or anything like that.

"Redundantly, the vice president has got a lot of medical people around him and so they were right there and probably were cautious than we would have been," she said. "The vice president has got an ambulance on call, so the ambulance came."

Cheney is no stranger to public hunting accidents. In 2002, he accidentally shot a companion in South Dakota's dove-hunt phenomena. He also travels frequently to Arkansas to hunt ducks, among other places.

Longtime friend

Armstrong and Cheney are a longtime friend who comes to the ranch to hunt almost once a year and who is very wife sportsmen," Holt said Whittington was compulsive, but she thought it was the first time he was ever hunted together.

"This is something that happened from time to time," Fran Eaton, 57, a former pepperoni party avid myself," said Armstrong.

The 25,000-hectare Armstrong ranch has been in the hill-studded south Texas family since the turn of the last century. Armstrong is the daughter of Edwin Armstrong, a politically prominent rancher who has been a guest at the White House and spent 40 years in director of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association. He died in October last year. Cheney was among the dignitaries who attended his funeral.

Cheney is a regularly hunting with a license he purchased in November for resi. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department spokesperson Steve Lightfoot said. The vice president flew back to Washington on Sunday morning, according to his office.

Correction

IN THE CAPTION of the photo of the running fashion in the Bonica Manila Diamond Pro-Am golf championship in the Sports section of Feb. 13, the first names of the winning pro, Donald Cutrale, and the tournament promoter, Edilberto Bonica, were misspelled.

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ELIMINATE GAS PAINS!

6 antidrug agents axed over Pasig shabu bust

To page A1

...ernando Del Rosario-Cruz, Jr. and Jeannette I. Andrade, reporters

The sacking of the six PNP agents brought to 22 the number of people axed in the wake of the discovery on Friday of a commodity of drug dens a few hundred meters away from the Pasig police headquarters.

Police yesterday filed charges against majority of the 315 arrested in the raid, while exonerating the release of 99 others.

"There is a possibility that it can happening in other cases, especially in Metro Manila," Philippine National Police Director Oscar Calderon (center) told reporters in Zamboanga City on Sunday, referring to the operations of the Pasig drug dens. "If they can operate on that long period, there's a possibility that some police officers are to cahoots."

The six PNP agents sacked will be the subject of an internal inquiry to determine whether they had been negligent in their duties or worse—involved in running the so-called "one-stop shop" for shabu users.

"The drug den could not have lasted this long without the cooperation of corrupt police officials and men," PDEA Director General Anselmo Avenido said in a statement.

The PDEA identified the relieved officers as SPO2 Antonio Gregorio Jr., SPO2 Oscar Badua, SPO1 Jimmy Calubiran, PO3 Ulysses Aguilahan, PO2 Felino Dumanlang and PO2 Ramil Policarpio.

The agency exercises operational supervision over all drug units of the PNP, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Customs.

Director Nilo Quesol, Metro Manila police chief, said the director police had wrapped up its investigation and submitted its report to him.

Quesol said the investigation focused on why and how the drug incidents were able to operate, and on the performance of Senior Insp. Ariel Medina, Pasig police chief.

"In tomorrow, we will have a decision," he said.

He said the local police had long known of the existence of drug activities in Ilaya Mapagaya in the Pasig city. Some said even conducted 26 antidrug operations there last year, filing cases against those arrested.

"The mere fact that they have conducted raids on that place on several occasions ... would indicate that they had fair knowledge that there [were] illegal drug [activities] being performed there," Quesol said.

"Nevertheless, it still existed ... It's really embarrassing for everybody."

Quesol, who had earlier sacked seven members of the police precinct in the area and 11 antidrug agents of the city and district, indicated that district officials might also be investigated to see how far the liability went.

Director Marcelo Ilio of the Region Drugs Special Operations Task Force said the PP recommended for release included those who tested negative for shabu traces.

"The sad part is the presence during the raid of grandparents, young professionals, children and members of affluent families from outside of Pasig City," Ilio said. "This is a clear indication that the place is a well-known drug market that was surprisingly sustained to operate clandestinely for years."

A total of 148 people have been charged with drug use, two with drug pushing, and 28 with maintaining drug dens in the possession's office.

Twenty-eight people were charged with possession of illegal drugs and 22 with possession of drug paraphernalia.

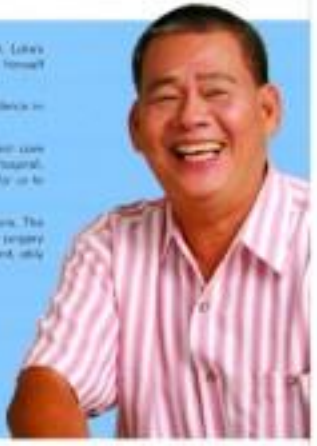
Two persons were charged with illegal possession of firearms.

Police could not immediately give a full breakdown of those charged and said it was possible that one person may have been charged with more than one offense. With reports from Helen...da Arcilla-Suarez, PDI Part Bar's Lester Rivenea, and Philip C. Salvosa

ST. LUKE'S HEART INSTITUTE

My heart goes only for the best.

Nilcaser A. Lozdora,
Property Manager,
Loving Husband and Father of 3 children
St. Luke's Heart Institute Patient from Guam



"St. Luke's is very close to my heart," says Mr. Lozdora. Physicians in Guam referred his wife Amalia to St. Luke's Heart Institute, where she underwent angioplasty and abdominal aneurysm surgery while Mr. Lozdora himself availed of the Cardiac Executive Checkup.

"The doctors at the Heart Institute are attentive and communicable medical advice in a way that inspired confidence in my wife and us, her family. The nurses are skilled and compassionate," says Mr. Lozdora.

He reveals that an increasing number of people in Guam and Micronesia swear by the excellent patient care provided by St. Luke's. He says that his wife, an allied health professional who works at Guam Memorial Hospital, heard of the good work done at St. Luke's from patients, physicians and colleagues. "So when it was time for us to decide where to seek off-island medical treatment, we knew who to confidently choose St. Luke's."

For nearly 22 years, patients with heart disorders have entrusted their medical care to St. Luke's Heart Institute. The Institute has stayed true to its commitment of providing total quality patient care by performing open heart surgery and coronary angioplasty with very high success rates. It has the country's most advanced medical equipment, ably operated by one of the world's best medical staff.

"For me," says Mr. Lozdora, "St. Luke's is the best."

St. Luke's Heart Institute

The superior diagnostic efficiency and clinical success rate of St. Luke's Heart Institute is comparable with the best medical centers in the world.

It has the most complete laboratory in the country to manage the world's most advanced equipment in the diagnosis of heart problems. Its wide array of state-of-the-art medical equipment is simply unmatched, and most of them are available only at St. Luke's. These are the following: • The first 1.5T Scanner in Southeast Asia and the only one in the country. Complete trial by the only Cyberknife in the Philippines today • The country's first experimental 64-slice CT Scanner • The country's first and only 3-Band MRI that makes advanced brain conventional MRI • The country's first and only Cardiac Catheter System with a fluoroscopic detector • The country's first and only non-based Gamma Camera/CT

St. Luke's Heart Institute is also enriched by top cardiologists, interventionalists and surgeons who are supported by a highly trained paramedical staff. For example, the Institute has a 99% success rate on PCI (percutaneous coronary intervention) and 98.6% success rate, which compares favorably with the US Nationwide Registry of 91.5% success rate.

St. Luke's Heart Institute values more lives and maximizes the quality of life in more patients.

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The WORLD

Efrin Lorraine B. Gasco

UN chief seeks talks as protests escalate

ISTANBUL—TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TURKS Sunday took part in protests over cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, as United Nations chief Kofi Annan urged calm and an end to "megaphone diplomacy."

In an interview with Danish public television, Annan called for dialogue to the uproar marked by violent demonstrations, blazing embassies and death threats against citizens of Denmark, where the cartoons were first published in September, but.

He said on the eve of a meeting with EU President George W. Bush that "we also need to [inaudible], we need to negotiate diplomacy and I think we should turn off the megaphone and begin to talk quietly to each other."

The UN secretary general also said he found the prophet caricatures "offensive in the sense that they are dealing with a religion that has over a billion followers around the world."

While more than 50,000 Turks took to the streets, the Arab League also called for coordinated to oppressive responses.

Iranian have accused radical clerics of whipping up the controversy by circulating the cartoons in Muslim countries, along with more offensive drawings that never appeared in the Jyllands-Posten newspaper.

Some of the cartoons were later reprinted in newspapers across the world, from Norway to France, Greece, Jordan, the US and New Zealand.

"Let me say that I also support freedom of speech ... But that freedom of expression and cartoons also should come with some responsibility, should come with some judgment," Annan said.

Arab Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said an economic boycott in the Saudi city of Jeddah that a confrontation between East and West had to be avoided.

"We Muslims (also) want justice (in collision with the West, it's) just one Muslim here, the hands of our like-minded brothers in Europe and America...and they are many—so that we can put out the vicious flame," he said. AFP

PHOTO dated Feb. 14, 2005 shows cars burning at the site of a massive bombing which killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 20 other people in the heart of Beirut. AFP

Lebanon somber, worried about future as it marks anniversary of Hariri slay

BEIRUT, LEBANON—VALENTINE'S Day in Lebanon has a somber hue this year. Although most gift and flower shops are decorated in themes of red and valour, the date of the holiday was changed and some Lebanese are not even celebrating it as the nation marks the one-year anniversary of the assassination of former Premier Rafik Hariri.

"Nobody is in the mood. They've spoilt this day for us forever," said Lama Mobi, a 28-year-old teacher browsing in one gift shop on a mall this week.

As air of despondency and concern for the future marks the first anniversary of the Feb. 14, 2005, truck bombing that killed Lebanon's most prominent politician—as usual, that Greek Lebanese said quickly forced the Syrian Army to withdraw.

Hariri's assassination was followed by a string of smaller bomb attacks that have killed or wounded a number of anti-Syrian personalities, fanning rallies, including Hariri's son and political heir, Saad, to leave. Political observers have escalated into uneasy violence on at least two occasions in the past month.

"The only good thing that came out of the assassinations is that the Syrians left," said Mohammed Abu Shedid, a 28-year-old graphic design student. "Otherwise it's been a year of death and destruction."

High optimism in the wake of the Syrian withdrawal, the first parliamentary elections free of Damascus encroachment and a UN investigation into the murder has given way to pessimism, disappointment and anxiety as the government has failed to uncover the culprits behind the bombings.

Capturing such politics, a sketch on the political science professor, "Boomer Mania"—a play on words which in Arabic translates into both "Number of a Hariri" and "Mine is Hariri"—has stirred up LBC TV shows Saad Hariri finally returning to live in Lebanon after a month of the five-star controlled investigation services are no longer active, Hariri, 35, is shown triumphantly salute-hailed and leaning on a podium upon his return 30 years hat.

Hariri did return to Beirut on Sunday—after months of self-exile in Saudi Arabia and France—to make part to attend mass organized to be massive demonstrations Thursday on the first anniversary of his father's killing.

Mindful of the mood, many restaurants and clubs agreed among themselves to move special celebrations on Valentine's Day to the preceding weekend. But shops decked in red hearts told the still not be celebrating anyway. AP

Prosecutors charge ex-Livedoor CEO

HORIE AFP

TOKYO—DAISUKE HORIE, THE former chief of Internet company Livedoor Co. who shook up corporate Japan with his aggressive business tactics, was charged on Monday with violating securities laws, Japanese media reported.

Horie was arrested on Jan. 23, just months after turning unexpectedly for parliament in a ruling party power here for prisoners on suspicion of trying to boost share prices by spreading false information, issuing new shares to "acquire" firms already under his control and then selling them for a profit to pad Livedoor's books.

Media reports said Horie, 33, has denied any illegal activities.

The reports said Livedoor was also charged with breaking securities law, as were three others: former Livedoor director Ryoichi Miyauchi, former Livedoor director Nozomi Okamoto, and former executive Osamu Nakamura.

The case exposed the inadequacies of the Tokyo Stock Exchange's trading systems, prompted loud calls for a lowkey securities watchdog, and embarrassed Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi because ruling party executives backed Horie in a failed bid for a seat in parliament last September. Reuters

US House probe faults gov't-wide failings over slow Katrina response

WASHINGTON—UNHEEDED warnings, poor planning and inertia in navigating the maze of Hurricane Katrina's destruction led to the slow emergency response from the White House down to local authorities, a House investigation concludes.

The 560-page report by a special Republican-dominated House inquiry into one of the worst natural disasters in US history concluded that key areas and local evacuations relied unprepared to anticipated and keep prevented loss of life and emergency responders.

It also said President George W. Bush received poor and incomplete counsel about the crisis unfolding in the Gulf Coast.

Overall, the House report said, the federal government's response to Katrina was marked by "bewilderment, failing and organizational paralysis."

"Our investigation revealed that Katrina was a national failure, an abdication of the most solemn obligation to provide for the common welfare," said a summary of the sweeping report obtained Sunday by The Associated Press.

"At every level—individual, corporate, philanthropic, and governmental—we failed to meet the challenge that was Katrina," the report concluded.

The House findings mark the first of two congressional inquiries and a White House review of the storm response expected over the next six weeks. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Calm urged over EU bird flu outbreak

ROME—Governments urged calm on Sunday after H5N1 bird flu made its first appearance in settlements on European territory and, while Nigeria was making what could be the third human death from the disease associated with the deadly virus on Africa. News on Saturday that Greece and Italy had thrown swans with bright, confirmed the H5N1 confirmed the scenario for EU virus since the virus killed at least 89 people in Asia and the Middle East and forced the culling of millions of birds. The swans claimed lives were found dead in Switzerland, raising to 19 the number of fatalities in the worsening outbreak that has also swept through Africa. Further suspected outbreaks on three more countries, with 15 more the Slovenia saying its test were samples of swan influenza not found any cases by Britain to further tests to avoid it was of the highly pathogenic variety. European officials tried to reassure people, stressing there have been no human cases reported in their region. Reuters

Cheney shoots fellow hunter

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas—Vice President Dick Cheney accidentally shot and wounded a companion during a weekend quail hunting trip in Texas, sparing the fellow hunter in the face and chest with pellets, Harry Whittington, a millionaire attorney from Austin, was in stable condition after being hit by the shotgun blast of a Corpus Christi hospital Sunday. The accident occurred Saturday at a ranch in south Texas where the vice president and several companions were hunting quail. It was not reported publicly by the vice president's office for nearly 24 hours, and then only after it was reported locally by the Corpus Christi Caller-Times on its website Sunday.

AP CHENEY

Northeast US hammered by record blizzard

BOSTON—The biggest snowstorm of the season lashed northeastern United States on Sunday, closing New York City for its deepest snow covered, cutting power to thousands of homes, closing airports and bringing to a standstill. "Make no mistake about it, this is a very dangerous, big storm," New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg told a news conference. At least 26 inches of snow fell in New York's Central Park, topping a powerful blizzard in Dec. 25, 1947, that killed 17 people, according to the National Weather Service and city authorities. There were two fatalities by late Sunday as people traveled above warnings and slept in roads. Authorities said one man died when his truck slid off a Virginia highway and overturned and a driver in a Baltimore suburb was transported rescue teams. Reported conditions delayed flights and buses and shut airports in New York and New Jersey, the Federal Aviation Administration said and the storm is not across and, as the storm churned up the northeast coast from Virginia to Maine. Reuters

Berlusconi to lose polls, survey says

ROME—The campaign for Italy's general election kicked off with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi contending the accuracy of opinion polls that indicate he will lose to Romano Prodi's center-left. Italy's president also kicked off proceedings on Saturday, issuing the decree that dissolved parliament and set the April 9 election date. Berlusconi's campaign was launched on Sunday in Naples, where he was born. The April 9-10 election will pit Berlusconi at the head of his conservative "House of Freedoms" center-right coalition against Prodi's "Unione" alliance, which ranges from hardline Communist parties to centrist Roman Catholic groups. AFP

Most Pinoys believe in lifetime partners–SWS

MOST FILIPINOS BELIEVE MARRIAGE is meant to last, following their commitment to be with one partner for life, a survey released Monday by Social Weather Stations showed.

The survey by independent pollster Social Weather Stations found that 68 percent of adult Filipinos believe there is one person they are destined to be with, while only 15 percent said they did not believe in it.

Of the 85 percent, 74 percent said they had found that person, while 24 percent said they had not. Eighty-two percent of those who had not yet found their lifetime partners were "still hoping" to find their special somebody, SWS said.

The survey also found that their husbands, wives or partners topped the list of persons that respondents said they were attached to for life.

The survey of 1,200 adult Filipinos was done from Nov. 27 to Dec. 5, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. AP

RP credit image boosted

Boosted p1

agers led by then Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima resigned.

Sustain gains

Fitch said the full implementation of the 12-percent VAT was expected to sustain the fiscal gains made last year, when the government's budget deficit dropped to 2.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). It estimated that the deficit-to-GDP ratio would hover just below 2.1 percent this year.

"This will allow the government debt/GDP ratio to continue its downward trajectory despite rising pressure on sovereign credit metrics as debt ratios gradually compare more favorably with rating peer group medians," Fitch said in its report.

The budget deficit last year stood at P146.5 billion, lower than the official ceiling of P169 billion. The better than projected fiscal performance was a result of tighter spending and higher income by the national treasury, which collects dividends from state-owned firms and invests in sovereign instruments.

While believing that short-term prospects for the Philippines will be rosy, Fitch said challenges to the completion of the fiscal reform agenda remained. It remained to be seen whether the administration measures like the new VAT law would indeed make the Philippine government's revenues at par with those of its neighbors.

"Even with the VAT in place, government revenue relative to GDP is the second lowest of all rated sovereigns, and it is yet unclear how effective it will prove to be in generating spending pressures, which we believe to be forthcoming," McCormack said.

Impeachment

He said the government should undertake more fiscal reform measures to prevent downward pressure on the country's credit ratings.

Fitch also warned that "political developments could still affect credit conditions," noting continuing efforts to revive the Genaro Arroyo impeachment complaint against the President.

The ratings firm said the amount of investment that the Philippines attracts equivalent to between 15 percent and 16 percent of GDP was not sufficient to increase the country's economic growth in the medium term to levels that will reverse the declining per capita income.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the "stable" outlook by Fitch was consistent with the assessment of the market on the Philippines. He noted that prices of Philippine bonds had been appreciating since the "stable" outlook by Fitch and Standard & Poor's.

"Fitch's stable outlook versus our (negative) by Moody's (of) confirms bullish outlook for the country," said Marcelo Sun, chief foreign exchange dealer at Equitable PCI Bank.

Fitch, Moody, and Standard & Poor's, Capital Economics, agreed that the turn-in-events among the world's most influential rating agencies bode well for the Philippines.

Roland Arnaiz, treasurer at Chinatrust Commercial Bank, Philippines said the market had digested the positive news, confirming that fresh improvements in Philippine global bond pricing were due to the generally favorable sentiment on emerging markets.

"Moody's negative outlook no longer affects the market because to a substantial degree they are not relying on private finance issues and would like to see fiscal developments to further solidify," Arnaiz said.

The European Union's ambassador in the Philippines, Jos de Bel, was upbeat on the Philippine economy, especially with the improvement in debt ratings outlook.

"I think the prospects for the Philippines are enormous. The confidence that will emerge from this is going to encourage investors from anywhere in the world and from Europe to yet take a look at the Philippines and that could translate to a further upsurge in the economy," De Bel said. PDI's a report from GEC Gobaynigan-P.

Investments

Wilshire Associates, the consulting firm of CalPERS, the biggest pension fund in the United States, recently raised the Philippines' ranking among 23 other emerging markets, moving the country up to 16th place from 18th last year, beating Malaysia, China, Russia and Indonesia.

Fitch noted that investments in the Philippines remained the lowest in Asia.

Impeachment

He said the government should undertake more fiscal reform measures to prevent downward pressure on the country's credit ratings.

Fitch also warned that "political developments could still affect credit conditions," no-

Comelec deal 'overpriced' by P500M

Comelec p1

ed the Comelec contract with Megabyte for being tainted "with graft and legal infirmities." It also noted that the Comelec's own technical specifications for the voting machines were not followed.

Bonjayon said he did not submit the bank documents to the high court when it examined the case, instead, he informally informed one of the justices about the documents.

Dalisay grilled Bonjayon on his apparent error, pointing out that it might be improper to talk with a justice about a case that was pending in the high court.

"Why did you not bring this to the attention of the Supreme Court?" Dalisay asked.

Bonjayon was silent for a moment before repeating the question he was at first "Why did I not bring it to the attention of the Supreme Court?"

"Yes," Dalisay said. "Officially (through a pleading."

"At that time, it was already submitted for decision," Bonjayon finally answered.

Still pending

But Dalisay told the "lawyer but that it was submitted the decision" means that "it was still pending resolution."

"And this is a public interest case. It would have served the public interest if you submitted these documents to the Supreme Court through a formal pleading. Would you not agree?" Dalisay said.

Bonjayon replied: "Maybe so, but at that time, I didn't think it necessary to do that because I know we were going to settle the case in the Supreme Court, considering the (evidence)."

Dalisay was not impressed. "The question of relevancy and the question of who's responsible for this overpricing are two different things (the Solicitor General). The question is why did you keep these documents to yourself?"

He asked if it was Bonjayon's "judgment call" not to inform the high tribunal. "Because, pricing is no small or easy half-billion peso and you did not find it appropriate to bring these documents to the attention of the Supreme Court?"

Bonjayon finally explained that while he did not formally submit the documents to the high court, he informed one of the justices about it.

"Only I say this: That I officially did not do that. I did not consult anything to or that, but I did bring it to the attention of one of the justices of the Supreme Court," he said.

Propriety

Instead of censuring the senators, Bonjayon's former chief went questions, especially about the propriety of talking to a Supreme Court justice about a case that was pending.

"Isn't that construed that a case is pending in the Supreme Court and you bring each to its purpose and entered document personally to the attention of a member of the court that's not officially filing it to the court?" Defensor said.

Bonjayon began to explain that there was "acquaintance of confidentiality" to the case, but Defensor immediately cut him off.

"This is a public hearing, ma'am," Defensor said. "This involves nonpaying. This involves billions of government funds."

Incorporators

When Defensor also grilled him about persons mentioned in documents to receive the $1.2 billion paid to MegaPacific, Bonjayon said the administration was "honest to the draw" by the corporation when it filed a case with a Makati court, demanding that the government pay it an additional P200 million.

Bonjayon said MegaPacific was "a team effort" consisting of businessmen who "have put assets to its name, and was incorporated only to align eligibility for the bidding of the system," he added.

He identified the incorporators as Willy E. Yu, Bernard L. Yu, Enrique T. Ongsiapeh, Benito F. Tiongsiapeh, Pedro O. Tiu, Johnson W. Hong, Bernard L. Ong and Lourdes A. Benitez.

On Jan. 26, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. asked the government to stop paying MegaPacific officials and cleanse with bid gross.

Absolutes

Pimentel said the clauses of recovering the assets and dismissal after officers and incorporators of MegaPacific "dissolved the company and closed down its office in Metro Manila."

He also pointed out the findings of Ombudsman investigators who discovered that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos allegedly had close ties to MegaPacific's incorporators.

The investigators noted that Abalos and MegaPacific incorporator Peter Tan had lived as sponsors at the wedding of a son of two other incorporators, the couple Enrique and Benito Tiongsiapeh.

Pimentel said Abalos said other Comelec commissioners also "committed an act of impropriety" when they and their wives traveled to Seoul in 2003 to visit the facility of the voting machine manufacturer.

He said he was informed that the plane tickets and hotel accommodations for the trip were handcrafted by the Korean company.

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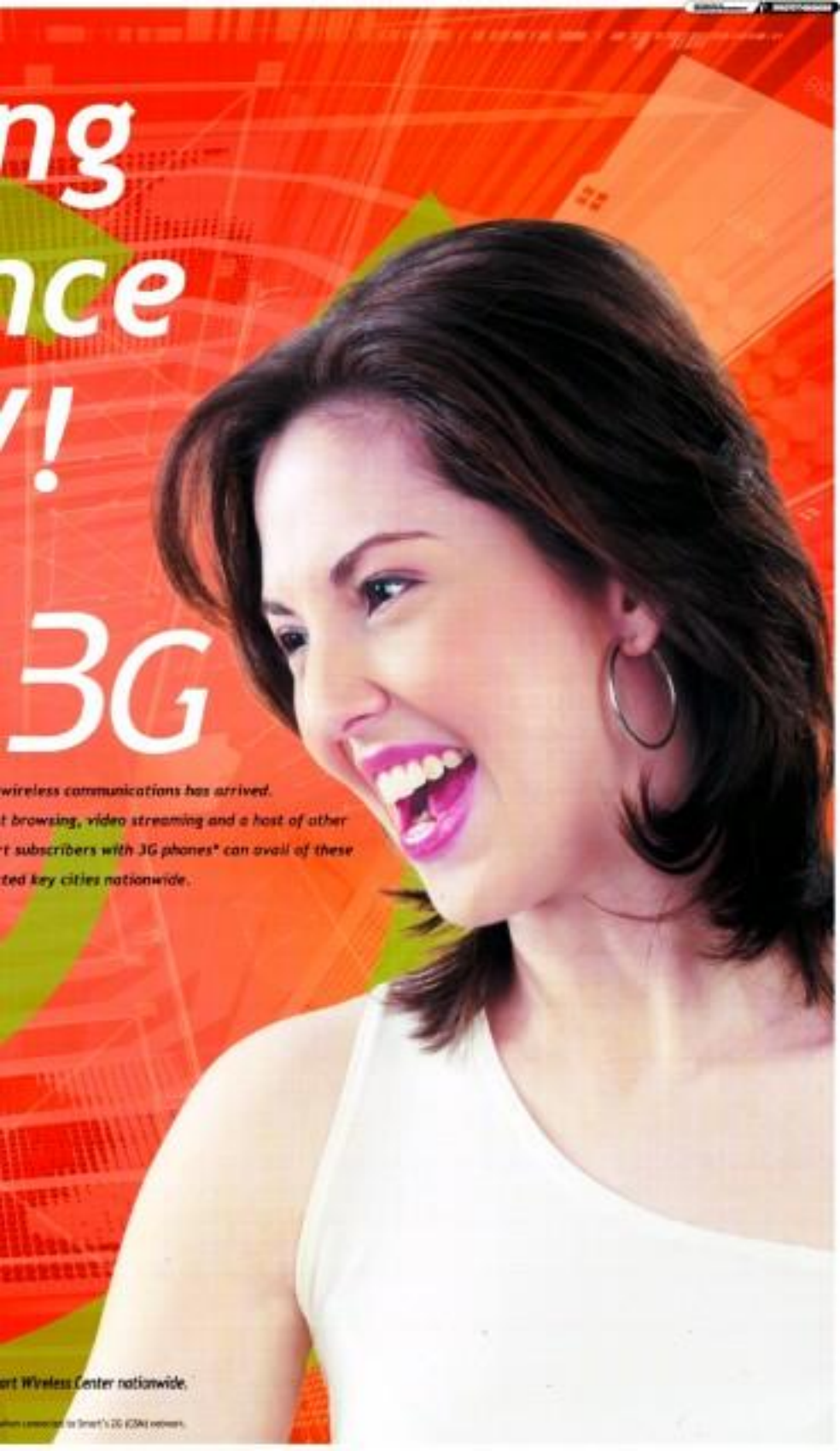
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Undemocratic

AT FIRST IT WAS REPORTED THAT MALACAÑANG had "blinked" in its confrontation with the Senate over Executive Order 464. Later, Palace officials made it clear that the President had not retreated from enforcing the controversial order that bans government officials from appearing at congressional hearings without her clearance. The order was lifted only with regard to the Senate hearings on the budget. Misleading officials said.

EDITORIAL

Maldeceiving apparently took this step to head off a constitutional crisis. The President's decision may provide temporary relief, but it does not solve the inter-department problem. The officials of the executive department are still banned from attending hearings of the Senate and the House of Representatives unless they obtain the President's approval.

Unless EO 464 is permanently revoked, it will remain a continuing source of friction between Malacañang and the Senate. In the course of legislating on various matters and investigating various issues, the Senate will need information from executive officials. But Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that EO 464 remains in effect, "especially for legislative inquiries which are deemed unproductive and clearly motivated by self-serving politics."

But who will determine what inquiries are "unproductive" and "motivated by self-serving politics"? The President? In that case, the Senate can never thoroughly conduct inquiries that may even just peripherally touch issues that concern, for instance, the conduct of the 2004 presidential election.

EO 464 violates the time-honored principle of checks and balances in a constitutional democratic government. Each branch of government is supposed to be independent and yet co-equal with the other branches. They can check one another. Without checks and balances, one branch will be dominant and will reign supreme over the others. This was what happened during the Marcos dictatorship: the President's power was unchecked, and he exercised virtually all the powers of government. He no more needs concurrence to this situation?

EO 464 violates the democratic principle of access to information. This is a right exercised by the media and by all citizens. People need to have access to information to be able to intelligently exercise their functions as citizens in a democracy. If ordinary citizens are given access to information, the more remote citizens, who are legislators for us and on behalf of the citizens, should be given the information they need.

EO 464 was one of the "weapons" resorted by President Macapagal-Arroyo to shield her from continuing attacks on the legitimacy of her presidency. It has been invoked by executive officials to avoid congressional inquiries into the "Hello Garci" tapes revealed and the P728-million fertilizer fund scam. The opposition has alleged that the "Hello Garci" tapes would prove that Ms Arroyo cheated in the 2004 elections and that a substantial part of the P728-million fertilizer fund went to some national and local officials for use in the same elections. But it seems that we will never know the truth about these two cases because executive officials have been effectively banned from talking about them by EO 464.

The issues call for transparency and public accountability. Government officials, including officials of the executive branch, should tell the people the truth about government activities and programs. They should remember that the President is accountable to the people who (supposedly) elected her, and that in other agencies or extensions of the President they are also accountable to the people. And yet the EO would make it appear that they are accountable only to themselves and to the Presidents.

EO 464 does not promote the cause of access to information, transparency and public accountability. It does not promote the cause of good governance. It has to go.

The 'mego syndrome'

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

EVER HEARD OF THE "MEGO SYNDROME"?

No? It's a professional hazard that prominent Sen. Leoding Cheongh (a humble pajero, he got voters to make sardine cans mean "mercedes-class cars" [image] when he's...

"Transparency is not the only thing most of many public officials, despite the Constitution's provisions on the citizen's right to information. So, the press must vote for "mego" guerrilla.

"For a good story, follow the smell of money," Journalist Chesterfield Reyes developed when he was in his teens, during Ferdinand Marcos' martial law regime of mainly contempt in India. That motivated "mego-seducing" hours of poring over financial data. It won for him the Magsaysay Award for Journalism.

He could not meet ex-Chancellor's wife Imee, President Macapagal-Arroyo's favorite Dodie Rio, did homework since department officials love watching at budget hearings. That deepened the confidence that blankets many agencies.

Deputy technical report *Administrative Commissioner* on fiscal reports. That unlocks many doors in subpoena. "Some of our best friends are auditors. But I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one," a grateful editor said after plowing through COA reports.

"Would the agency perform as it would along with having if auditors hadn't failed in Reporting 2003? It's the ordinary taxpayer that the COA is ultimately responsible to.

Still, the money trail is there, buried under auditing tapes. Even though the two volumes demand Financial Report on National Government [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Barangay officials should also be charged

THE SENATORS' SECRET SEEK TO HIDE A temporary restraining order against EO 464 was severely unnecessary. Two before this move, the Supreme Court had already scheduled for Dec. 13 the hearing on their petition to have the EO declared unconstitutional. Apparently, the senators just wanted to highlight the Palace's intransigence in refusing to revoke the EO, even after the Commission on Human Rights had asked it to withdraw the issuance.

The EO was a direct result of the confrontation between the Palace and the Senate, and from both sides clearly must share the blame. The Senate has been exposed to ridicule by the unnecessary delay in its investigation of alleged illegal acts by Senate officials, and from the moment the EO was issued, the issue was framed as a contest between the Palace and the Senate, with the public caught in the middle.

The EO was a direct result of the confrontation between the Palace and the Senate, and from both sides clearly must share the blame. The Senate has been exposed to ridicule by the unnecessary delay in its investigation of alleged illegal acts by Senate officials, and from the moment the EO was issued, the issue was framed as a contest between the Palace and the Senate, with the public caught in the middle.

Former President Cory Aquino has been making the rounds of schools and shrines, urging the nation to emulate the "people power" spirit she helped muster in 1986. Her message is timely, coming as it does in the midst of a political crisis that has many people worried about the future of democracy in the country. But the former President's call for unity would be more effective if she were to acknowledge that the spirit of 1986 has been severely tested in the years since she left Malacañang.

Ms. Aquino's own presidency was not without its share of controversies, and the fact that she was able to survive seven coup attempts is testament to the deep divisions that existed in the military during her term. Many of the officers who led the failed coups against her are now in the service of President Arroyo, and some have been promoted to high positions in the military

Incompetent and cynical

LETTERS

FORMER SUPREME COURT ASSOCIATE Justice Isagani A. Cruz dismissed, in his Feb. 4 column, the Consultative Commission's "presumptuous superficiality with no credentials or power to advise the rightful authorities on the serious subject of constitutional reform."

Because of his extreme bias against President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Concom members, Cruz ignored the very subject he professed. "I have not bothered to read the proposed revision of the present Constitution as prepared by the Consultative Commission because its presentation is suspicious, its very existence is doubtful, and its operations are unfriendly expatriate."

Cruz maintains the "distinguished" members of the 1986 ConCom with the "shabby" qualifications of most of the 2005 Concom members whom he says as "practically anonymous and hardly reliable students" of constitutional subjects. In fact, the 53 Concom members, coming from different parts of the Philippines, are highly competent and also closely in touch with the people. The real text of the Concom members' qualifications should be the quality of their ideas and proposals, which Cruz refused to look into. The retired justice prefers to pry judge.

Per Cruz's information, the Concom members made a serious assessment of the shortcomings of our present constitution: (1) its centralized and dysfunctional presidential form of government, (2) its highly centralized and ineffective unitary structure, and (3) its unduly restrictive economic policies that discourage foreign business from providing our country with badly needed capital and technology so that we can create many more jobs, increase personal incomes, and raise revenues for government services.

Everywhere the Concom held its regional consultations around the country, representatives of various sectors, as well as local political leaders, were present. Records will show that they supported the main proposals of Concom, but without any basis in fact, how can Cruz say that Concom was extravagant and wasteful in doing its work? In fact, Concom accomplished its important and difficult mission in the shortest time possible by working very hard. It should be emphasized that Concom's public hearings were the first time in our history that people were seriously consulted on their concerns about and true desires in the proposed reforms. With the benefit of public consultations, the Concom proposals serve as useful reference for our very busy legislators when they themselves finally work on amending the Constitution.

A quote from John Locke best describes Cruz's refusal to educate himself on the Concom's proposals: "Few opinions are usually inspected and always approved without any other reason but because they are new and not already customary."

It is not the Concom that is incompetent and "cynical."

—LTTE MONICO LIRIO-REYES,
secretary general, Concom

Senate not running away from Cha-cha debate

THIS REFERS TO THE BELIEVER OLI (www.Overtoon's column titled "It's now or never, let her admit to debate," (PDI, 1/24/06) it is already not one that the senators are afraid to go into a debate on the proposed Charter change and shift to the parliamentary system. Every day we see them on TV as vocal about them in the papers discussing the merits or demerits of the proposed constitutional amendments and revisions. The senators are a necessary balance of national and local interests, as well as amongst civil liberties, as a bicameral system, while congressmen are a more responsive government in a unicameral system.

But what is now more important is disseminating to the public about the personalities and institutions involved in the debates. According to a current survey by the Social Weather Stations (Dec. 27-Dec. 4, 2005), Senate President Franklin Drilon, who has openly opposed Charter change, has a net satisfaction rating of +29 percent compared to 8 percent for Speaker Jose de Venecia, the prime mover of Charter change. On the other hand, the Senate, which as a whole is against Charter change, has also a higher net approval rating of +34 percent, while the House of Representatives, the majority of which wants Charter change, has a net rating of only +17 percent. Thus, public opinion clearly supports the Senate position on constitutional change, though approval rating also praises the public's appreciation of its performance as a bulwark of individual liberties and civil rights. The House majority has abandoned its duty to defend the public interest on the ball of partisan and local interests, while the Senate continues to uphold and vigorously defend the national good.

—JOSE D. LINA JR., Senator-elect
Public Relations and Information Bureau,
Senate of the Philippines

Hero's welcome not political act

I BIG TO DISAGREE WITH THE inquirer columnists on the hero's welcome accorded by President Macapagal-Arroyo, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and other prominent personalities to Manny Pacquiao after the latter beat Erik Morales in Las Vegas last Jan. 22.

The hero's welcome was not just for Pacquiao. The TV coverage of the affair shows that the gold medalists in the GSA Games, and the boxers' trainers and publicists, who returned to the rightful owners the money they loved, were likewise honored and given due recognition by the President. It was a moral obligation and the civic duty of President Arroyo and Mayor Atienza as chief executives to give them special recognition for their hard-earned victories and their honesty which brought honor and pride to our country. It was therefore clear that GMA was not riding on Pacquiao's popularity to win "popularity."

Pacquiao stunned first he fought Morales, who beat him in their previous meeting, for pride and glory not only for himself but also for his country and people.

—DOROTEO L. FLORES,
Concejo-ejale Buenos Solid...
Leon Gitle Street, Lapaz,
General Santos City

An interesting revolution

"EDUCATION IS A PUBLIC VALUE," HOW true. I read with much interest the commentary of Ms Marie Lim-Ayroso on the challenges of improving public school education and the role the community must play to make it happen. (PDI, 02/06/06)

It would be interesting to see how new technologies, such as the Internet, can be used to bridge the challenge of establishing conversation groups involving parents, teachers, the school community and the wider community they serve.

I believe that community-based initiatives to improve the public school system should be monitored and assessed regularly. Sometimes, one of the toughest points into such initiatives effectively serve their purpose. As is the rule in business, economic spots must yield meaningful and positive results to make a sustainable enterprise. I believe a strong discipline and approach need to be followed in investments that seek to develop a higher quality of human resources, which in effect could uplift the value of the communities supporting them.

I would like to know more about the Education Revolution 2006 and, perhaps, discuss some technology enablers that may help in establishing a strong link between school beneficiaries and education stakeholders.

—JERRY PESA,
jerry@worldbankofchina.com

Coco levy compromise not good for good governance, accountability

RE, SMALL COCONUT FARMERS IN Negros Oriental, are calling for the resignation of farmer Camilo Gabis as chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government. He also opposes the compromise agreement for the coco levy fund(s) being peddled by some coconut farmers group.

Gabis's opposition to an out-of-court settlement is contrary to our collective and fundamental interest in seeing through that justice is served out to the millions of small coconut farmers who have been deprived of their right to benefit from the coco levy that was forcibly imposed on them more than 18 years ago.

Many of our colleagues have died without seeing the just restitution of the coco levy cases, but this is not enough. Justice also means to yield to an out-of-court settlement. We believe we still can (or just deserve to) only when we shall have fully recovered the coco levy funds and assets, but also when those who perpetrated this wrongdoing on us shall have been convicted and punished.

Gabis and the pro-compromise coconut farmers misread our collective sentiments. The compromise will not put closure to the social sins committed by Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. and his cronies. And it would be a debilitating blow to our nation's struggle for good governance and public accountability!

—CLARITA B. MAYOR,
BOR chair,
Negros Oriental Cococonut Farmers MPC,
o/o Rpa, agrikultural society adms.com

Some thoughts about women in gov't, etc.

WHY NOT ELECT OR APPOINT MORE women in government service so as to minimize, if not completely eliminate, graft and corruption in government?

Why not women? Since Manila runs a "super province" with its leader, the governor, to be elected by the people, I think this will solve the problems and misunderstandings that come between the chief of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and some mayors of the metropolis. And if will actually redound to the benefit of the people of Metro Manila!

Why not increase bank interests on savings accounts, and cut the same time, reduce the withholding tax on such accounts from 20 percent to 10 percent? This way our people will be encouraged to deposit their extra money in banks.

—PACI B. MORTEL,
#81A-1 Court, Mahanlay,
Mariktan City

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Across the NATION

175,000 cubic meters of spilled oil in Semirara now under water

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE CLEANUP OF THE MASSIVE OIL SPILL IN SEMIRARA, Antique from a National Power Corp. barge had to go deeper.

Though parts of the surface of 226 hectares of affected mangroves appear to be oil-free, the area underneath is still a different story.

Under the mangroves, there are about 175,000 cubic meters of oil contaminated by the fuel that had settled under water after sinking on the seabed two days, according to Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Commander Joseph Coyme.

The amount of contaminated soil was determined by Jun Ballesteros, a hazardous materials specialist from the University of the Philippines with whom the PCG's Marine Environmental Protection Command had spoken.

The contaminated soil would fill the mangroves and the marine life, which were what the cleanup was supposed to save, said Coyme.

"Though it may appear from the surface that the oil has been removed, it really just went under," Coyme said in an interview yesterday. "We cannot just let the contaminated soil stay under the water. That is not serving the ecological balance."

The spill, which the PCG said involved about 364,000 liters (2 kl), took place Dec. 11, 2005 when a Napocor barge ran aground off Semirara.

But Napocor said the spill involved about 200,000 liters, and reported recently that 20 percent of affected mangrove areas and 80 percent of affected coastal areas had been cleaned.

Because of the latest finding on the amount of contaminated oil, the PCG would recommend that Napocor employ the bioremediation method to remove the fuel from the soil, Coyme said.

The PCG is supervising the cleanup, which the Napocor is required to fund and undertake.

Bioremediation involves the use of microorganisms to reduce their concentration toward pollutants.

Workers use the manual method, which involves spraying the affected areas with an oil dispersant and then cleaning it with high-powered water to remove the spilled fuel.

Coyme said the use of bioremediation was reported to save the lives of the mangroves and other marine life, but added the cleanup would have to be done more quickly to lessen the damage it would cause to the environment.

He, however, added the PCG was somewhat alone whether the Napocor would be able to shoulder the increased cost once the power company was having trouble collecting its insurance claim on the oil spill.

Napocor spokesperson Dennis Gana said in an earlier interview that the company was resolving the issue concerning its insurance claims.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said as early as three weeks after the oil spill, or in early second January, an assessment was already given that the oil spill had no possibility of affecting the inland paradise of Boracay.

The Philippine Coast Guard confirmed this, saying there was no longer any threat to Boracay, amid concerns from various groups that the oil spill would adversely affect the tourist paradise.

Rescuers find bodies of 3 of 7 dead in S. Leyte mudslides

By Jaro Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

RESIDENTS of a village in Tacloban City get rescued in triple by a rescuer who offered to save his pet chicken before helping people across floodwaters.

SOGOD, SOUTHERN LEYTE—Rescuers yesterday retrieved the bodies of three of the seven persons who were buried after chasing mudslides in Barangay Cabagnan here.

Sogod Mayor Medwyn Tan said the three rescuers found at about 11 a.m. yesterday under 150 feet below the cliff in their ages-ago, Kabagnan, about 20 km from the town's proper.

The bodies of Hermie Fernandez, 63; Marlon Sudaldo, 39, and Rolando Mihalon, 42, were brought to the barangay hall and were later examined by their loved ones.

Tan, however, said the three and four others who were buried in the mudslide were drivers and passengers of Asiel/Asiel (rented motorcycles) and not construction workers as earlier reported by the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC).

He said the rescuers were taking shelter from the rain inside an abandoned farmhouse near the edge of the cliff.

Mounds of loose earth, triggered by six days of incessant rain, hit the farmhouse and swept a 15-year-old boy.

Only the body of Roberto Abanto, 42, was recovered on Sunday afternoon, as the rain hampered rescue operations.

Rescue teams, composed of members of the Southern Leyte Emergency Response Team, the police and soldiers from the Army's 43rd Infantry Battalion, continued to look for the bodies of those others identified as Angelie Sanico, 30; Fernando Sanico, 35, double fiance, 20.

Tan said the bodies were presumed dead because it was unlikely that they would survive after being buried for a pile of earth.

Incessant rains for six days also triggered flash floods and landslides in nine towns in Southern Leyte, prompting the provincial government to place the province under a state of calamity.

Four persons were declared missing after they were swept by floodwaters in Barangay Cabi, San Francisco town on Thursday night to Southern Leyte.

Supt. Glenda Edwardo, provincial director in Southern Leyte, said the three were last seen by co-workers riding a boat on their way home to Cabi.

But, he added, it was not known whether they reached their destination because they had an overturned any calls.

Reports from the PDCC said the three had been swept by floodwaters in Barangay Cabi.

Landslides were also reported in Barangay Cabig, Libon town, leaving three Barangays of Santa, Pinamdan and Cabagnan isolated.

Also in San Francisco, Libon and San Ricardo was hit by landslides and floods in 2005, which killed 150 people.

A total of 926 families, or 3,358 people, from 14 barangays of San Francisco, in Pinatar Island, Southern Leyte have been forced to leave their homes after continuous heavy rains for over a week caused the river to swell and trigger numerous landslides.

The evacuees are now staying in the town's gym, parish center and schools.

Last Saturday, the municipal government, led by town mayor Lorenzo Jones and Vice Mayor Diego Yebor, went around the barangays and dispatched dump trucks to construct the residents to move to safer grounds.

Traumatized by the December 2003 landslides, where about 120 people died in Pinatar, a fishing village in San Francisco, the residents heeded the appeal of local officials who have been vigilant every time continuous rains are experienced.

The small dam for Galaxy's irrigation system was damaged in Ormoc River was swollen, flooding over 200 families in the adjoining Barangay of Gaboy, Cabi, and Bangcuran to leave their homes. Over 100 families have also left Manang due to flooding. With reports from Jaya Gubiera and Jhanice Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

Poverty in Cordillera worsened, says study

BAGUIO CITY—CORDILLERA poverty worsened in 2005, with Ifu Province most worsening with Mapas as the country's fourth poorest province.

Using non-statistical interviews to measure poverty, the Regional Development Council (RDC) in the Cordillera concluded that 2005 had been "the least performing year" for the first region created after the 1986 Edsa Revolt, said Leon Dacuang, Cordillera administrative director of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

For the "dismal" growth poverty has not exacerbated the region's largely indigenous people's population to endorse planning, he added in a statement here, Neda admitted.

No new mining investments poured into the region, said Juan Ngalob, Isuda Cordillera director, although the RDC has adopted a policy on "responsible mining" that is anchored on public acceptability."

Ifugaot hosted the country's richest mines, like Benguet Corp., but both Benguet and Mt. Province have rejected offers to rebuild a mining industry in their areas, Ngalob said.

Quoting an Ifugao official, Dacuang said "we may not have money, but we are not hungry."

The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) reported a significant reduction in the number of poor Cordillera families, after it tallied a drop from 45.8 percent in 2000 to 34.5 percent in 2003.

But last year, the region fell short of meeting its 42% target for 2005, generating jobs for only 632,000 Cordillerans.

Between January and July last year, the Cordillera economy could only accommodate 3,000 new employees for its services sector. Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Cop tagged in slay attempt on mayor charged

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—The Philippine National Police filed murder and frustrated murder charges against a police officer tagged by his alleged cohorts as the brains in the ambush that wounded a Pampanga mayor and killed his aide on Tuesday.

Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapeid, Central Luzon police director, gave the name suspect, Chief Insp. Jorge Bin Bunior, until Feb. 17 to give himself up to authorities.

Lapeid said while the murders for Bunior has been expanded by the national police headquarters to Metro Manila and other regions, operating officers have been instructed to apply reasonable force if the suspect resists arrest.

"There is no shoot-to-kill order on him. We want him to peacefully submit and avail himself of due process," Lapeid told reporters here on Monday.

The charges, which were filed at the Pampanga prosecutor on Sunday came after the police arrested two alleged hired assassins.

In their sworn judicial confession made in the presence of a lawyer, Arnie Sumonio, 22, and Jefferson Perez, 23, implicated Bunior and his brother, Mayor Vice Mayor Jorge Jay Bunior, in the 12:30 a.m. attack that wounded Mayor Peter Pineda, 58, and killed JPDH Nicanor Tabus, 54.

There were still no strong piece of evidence linking the vice mayor to the assassination plan, Lapeid said. The vice mayor has since gone into "hiding," making no contact whatsoever to authorities, he added. Vice Mayor Bunior has not also replied to inquiries calls to set for info.

Negotiations for the payoff of P120,000 in Peso as Feb. 8 and the execution of the attack in Sinumot were led by no less than Chief Insp. Bunior, according to Senior Insp. Leonardo Espina, Pampanga police's director, quoting confessions obtained from the two suspects.

Aside from Bunior, Encomienda and Perez, the charges also covered Gene Encomienda and Pete Encomienda who allegedly took part in the attack. Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Subic execs declare festival successful

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—THE THREE-day "Subic Bahay Festival," participated in by various stakeholders in this freeport, Zambales, Bataan and Olongapo City, succeeded in generating awareness of this investment haven's potential for tourism-related activities, officials here said.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Administrator Armand Arreza said the festival's success could be gauged by the number of participants in various events and the grand parade on Saturday that exceeded the organizers' expectations.

The festival featured the best destinations and locations in the country for a wide range of adventures and recreation activities. It also highlighted the tourist attractions of Bataan, Olongapo City, Subic Bay Freeport and Zambales.

"I think we were successful in generating awareness of what Subic and its outlying communities have to offer not only among local but also international tour operators," Arreza said.

"We were able to show our capacity to hold events as big as the Subic festival and upgrade our products for international market," he said.

George Lorenzana, chair of the Greater Subic Bay Tourism Bureau, the lead organizer of the event, was ecstatic.

"We are all very happy with the way things turned out," he said.

Lorenzana said the event turned out very successful even if it was planned hastily. "We are very proud and practically with zero money." Andrei Joaquin, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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ECOZONE PUSHED

GMA wants tax perks in Clark

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC Zone—President Macapagal-Arroyo wants to place this special economic zone under the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) so investors here will also enjoy the tax and duty-free privileges given to locators at the Subic Bay Freeport.

But the President, during a meeting with reporters at the Holiday Inn Hotel on Friday, said the move would depend on the Supreme Court's final decision on whether business locators in Clark were covered by tax and duty-free privileges under Republic Act No. 7227 or the Bases Conversion and Development Act.

Ms Arroyo has certified as urgent the bills seeking the tax incentives to Clark and other economic zones not covered by RA 7227. There are House Bills 4900 and 4901, sponsored by Victor Ma. Jose Linga.

HB 4900 seeks tax exemption for investors in Clark and in the special economic zones in Camp John Hay (Baguio City) and Poro Point (San Fernando City, La Union).

HB 4901, on the other hand, seeks to amend certain RA 7227 to include the above special economic zones as tax and duty-free zones like Subic in Zambales.

Antonio Ng, Clark Development Corp. president, said the bills would provide a stimulus to the more than 300 locators in Clark.

"With the approval of the two House bills, the locators and investors in Clark will be given assurance that the incentives being provided them will be honored and will prevent them from avoiding other areas for their operations," said Ng.

They President Hotel former authorized the tax incentives received by Clark locators through Presidential Proclamation 420.

Joe Mollo, PIA Central Luzon Desk

RIVER JOB
A fisherman checks his fish cages in a river in Dampalay, Cauayan City in Isabela Sur.

5 GenSan robbers slain in clash with cops

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—FIVE suspected members of a robbery gang operating in Central Mindanao were killed in a clash with members of the police's Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division (RIID) here on Saturday night.

Supt. Willie Sangaru, RIID and special operations group chief, said his group has been tracking down the suspects after the group robbed the Davao City-bound Allaya couple early this week while on their way to the Boalong City terminal.

Police said the victims had just left the Land Bank branch here where they encashed a check for P150,000.

From there, the couple were reportedly trailed by the suspects and robbed before reaching the terminal.

On Saturday evening, Dagsan said an informant tipped him on the group's presence in Lagao here.

When the lawmen arrived in the area, the suspects were allegedly robbing the Davao Del-Angat Distribution System Inc., one of the biggest distributor of groceries here.

Police said the suspects, armed with handguns and riding on two motorcycles, held the office's guard at gunpoint and took with them P40,000 in cash.

Police were already waiting outside as the suspects emerged from the office. An exchange of gunfire followed.

A policeman, SPO2 Gonzalo Saladad, suffered a cut in the eyebrow during the encounter.

Aguilea Jomic, PIA Mindanao bureau

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10 teen detainees bolt Pasig City jail

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TEN BOYS, WITH AGES ranging from 14 to 17, escaped from the Pasig City Jail yesterday morning by cutting the iron grills of the window in their cell.

The incident led to the relief of city jail warden Supt. Linda Mingoa. She was replaced by Supt. Nic Quiatchon who immediately ordered his men to go after the escapees.

More than 10 hours after the prison break was reported, jail officials still refused to issue a statement to media persons seeking an official statement.

But some jail guards confirmed that the children, jailed for charges ranging from robbery to drug possession and even rape, managed to escape from their cell on the second floor of the City Jail building 8 at about 4 a.m.

Most of the escapees were jailed just three to four months ago, but one of them had been in jail since November 2003. One of them was jailed for alleged rape in February 2004, according to a document given to the Inquirer.

There are at least 23 minors in the cell, separated from adult suspects, but only 10 joined the jailbreak.

The escape, carried out just as the barangay curfew for minors expired at 4 a.m., went unnoticed for more than four hours, until jail guards conducted the morning headcount.

The jailbreak placed the city in the spotlight for the third time in two months, following the Philippine Azkals stampede on Feb. 4 and the discovery of a shabu den on Feb. 11.

For 'bleeders,' love is a just a touch away

By Dulce Fenix Bayday
Contributor

JOAN EMMANUEL DIONISIO, 15, NANCY Encanto, 15, and Eugene de la Cruz, 16, may look like normal teenagers. Set inside their bodies, they have one thing in common: They have a congenital bleeding problem, a rare form of sickness. They are known as PWH or People With Hemophilia.

The three—absolute foe life—are not allowed to play basketball or soccer as teenagers would want to do, since it is dangerous for them to get hit.

Even if they can go to school, they stay or may not graduate on time. If they start to bleed for various reasons, in various cases, they can be confined in a hospital, for weeks or even months at a time, for treatment and blood transfusion.

People with hemophilia do not bleed any faster than normal, but they bleed for a longer time. Women who have the hemophilia gene are called carriers. For each of a woman carrier's children, there is a 50% chance that a son will have hemophilia, and a 50% chance that a daughter will carry the gene.

If treated immediately and given the proper care and medicine, persons with hemophilia can live long. Eugene's uncle, Estrido 69-year-old Eugene de la Cruz, is a retired schoolteacher who first met Joan in high school because his lower hemorrhoid that is internal bleeding. He had to stay in bed for six months, with crushed ice wrapped in a thick towel on his knee, to stop the swelling. It worked for a while until he had to leave school to find a job.

Due to his deformed knee, he had to stay at home and work as a helper to his sister's store. He spends his free time watching television and cannot leave the house unless he uses the car since using public transport is dangerous for him.

Jacelle 16-year-old Randolf Apanay: "I stayed in a government hospital's free ward for nine months in the year 2001. Even with the amount of plasma they used on me, given by the hospital and various donors, I felt I wasn't getting well. I became depressed and thought I'd die. I'd had an operation on the right hospital where he stayed for a month before he was discharged. Now married and the father of two sons, Randolf works as an illustrator for the Philippine Air Force.

Bleeders for life like Ryan, Yancy, Eugene, Estrido and Randolf are leading brave lives, struggling to stay alive and healthy by having a positive attitude, being productive, supported by families and friends.

In 1993, a group of doctors and parents organized Hophie (Hemophilia Association of the Philippines for Love and Service), the first big support group for hemophiliacs.

Hophie's executive secretary and director Eduardo D. Lacandalo said the acronym, meaning "touch," is a literal way of expressing love and support, especially when caregivers gently rub or massage the swollen joints of PWH.

Hophie has 209 active members who meet every quarter to search for psycho-social support, among others.

Hhurry persons of PWH have income below P20,000 per month. Only ten percent can afford the factor concentrate, the standard form of treatment.

For those who want to know more about hemophilia or want to join as volunteers, Dionisio said, or are interested to offer forms of support to PWH in Baguio, call (632) 732-3683 during office hours, and (632) 922-6401 after office hours.

HUGH hopes for PWH (from left) Yancy Giovanni, Dustin Miranda, Ryan Dionisio, Eugene de la Cruz, Bill Lacandalo and Randolf Apanay. EDDIE MATIAS

Worker dies in explosion

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A MAN WAS KILLED WHEN A tank containing carbon dioxide exploded inside a refilling plant in Caloocan City in most yesterday.

Ernesto Oliveria, 52, a construction worker who was repairing the plant's roof, was killed instantly after he was hit by flying debris.

The incident took place inside the Caloocan Gas Corp. compound, located in the city's industrial park along Gen. Luis Street in Barangay Caloocan City.

The impact of the explosion was so forceful that Oliveria's body was cut into two after the tank, which weighed around 60 kilos and was about three-and-a-half feet long, slammed into him, said Fernando Ramos, a technical supervisor at the factory. Several rocks were also thrown as far as 20 meters away from the site of the explosion. The compound is a refilling station for carbon dioxide tanks.

Northern Police District director Chief Supt. Raul Gonzalez said he would recommend the plant's temporary closure to allow a technical team to inspect it to ensure the workers' safety. He added that although carbon dioxide is not flammable, it could still pose a danger to workers if there are no safety measures in place.

1 more dead in Tondo blast

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE GRENADE EXPLOSION ON Sunday afternoon at the Tavera Compound in Tondo, Manila that killed four people has claimed another life.

Roger Subayan, 33, of Gate 13 Area B, Tavera Compound, died of shrapnel wounds at the Gat Andres Bonifacio Hospital hours after the incident, according to PCSupt. Isagani Nerez of the Manila Police District (MPD) Homicide Section. Subayan was drinking with his neighbors in the compound when suspects Eugene Ortega and Alex Lanojan cast Eugene Castillano and Alex Lanojan as earlier reported by the police) approached the group and tossed Rodrigo Ogarit.

The police had reported earlier that the suspects' target was Subayan. Jimenez, however, said it was Ogarit.

After a few minutes, witnesses heard an explosion, caused by an IMEZ grenade which Ortega was allegedly carrying. Ortega and Canlajan were killed instantly along with two bystanders. Ten other persons, including four children, were injured.

MetroBriefs

Tree planting on Valentine's Day

A PROEN BUSINESS group has a unique plans for celebrating Valentine's Day today—exercise is with the city's traffic management system more efficient. From now on, when courses or arise look system will be used to streamline the car parked on streets or in areas designated as "no parking" or "no stop" zones. Violators must pay a P600 fee to the city government before the driver can get his vehicle back.

No more illegal parking in Manila

THE MMDA has announced formally launched yesterday a campaign to make the city's traffic management system more efficient. From now on, when courses or arise look system will be used to streamline the car parked on streets or in areas designated as "no parking" or "no stop" zones. Violators must pay a P600 fee to the city government before the driver can get his vehicle back.

Puppets to teach youth about health

THE DILIMAN Area Council of Letter City Guards, in cooperation with officials of Taytay, Rizal, the Philippine National Red Cross, and the Rotary Club of Taytay, will hold a family health fair and contest for students on Feb. 23 and 24. The health fair, which will be held at the Barangay San Juan multi-purpose covered court in Taytay, Rizal, includes lectures, puppet shows, and an exhibit to educate the youth on diseases, the dangers of smoking, drinking and drug use, nutrition, hygiene and first aid.

Car hijackers kill stude

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A TEENAGER BECAME THE latest casualty of car jackers who struck at RP Homes, Barangay Sunday night.

Richard Capili, a 19-year-old incoming student, was shot dead by three men who also took the van he was driving, SPO1 Generoso Bandao said the incident took place inside the subdivision, in front of the GSC Laundry Center Mall on Gil Puyat Street corner President's Avenue, at around 8:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Capili had parked in front of the mall to wait for his sister. As he sat inside his gray Toyota Revo, three unidentified men approached him and forced him out of the van.

According to witnesses, a scuffle ensued between the victim and the suspects. The victim might have resisted the suspects as he was shot," Bandao said the incident yesterday. Case investigators PO2 Tito Calow said he has no report that witnesses saw the suspects assist Capili before they boxed a gunshot.

The teenager was able to get out of the car and try for help. But one of the suspects, armed with a .45-cal pistol, shot him, the report said. The suspects then fled on board the victim's car, leaving Capili slumped on the pavement, said Calow. According to Bonde, the victim's father, his children had stopped at a grocery and a drugstore before going to a bookstore. "My daughter said she was already inside the bookstore when she heard gunshots. She saw her brother slumped on the pavement of the parking lot," Bonde said in a phone interview.

The teenager was brought to the Pembanger Medical Center but he was declared dead on arrival. Investigators found a bullet wound on his right armpit. The bullet passed through the armories of his lungs before it reached his heart. Pembanger police chief Supt. Ronald Lumbao said an autopsy showed one of the suspects had already been sent out to different police stations.

What's so special about these top cops?

THE HEADS OF THE VICE, Quezol, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), when he said he was leaving the Pasig City police chief haven't gained for hailing on stop the operation of the "shabu free market" right in the heart of the city!

If there is anybody to be investigated, it should be Quezol because he's the big fboss of the police in Metro Manila.

By parking the blame on his subordinate, Senior Supt. Raul Medina, Pasig police chief, Quezol was trying escape responsibility. If Quezol has any dedication at all, he should not to be relieved on the principle of command responsibility.

If a regional commander could be sacked for not being able to stop "jueteng" in his region, much more so a regional commander under whose very nose dangerous drugs were being sold.

Quezol cannot escape responsibility for the open, huge-scale selling of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) in the Mapayapa Compound in Pasig City.

The raid was a slap-on-the-wrist because it was conducted by another group, the anti-illegal drugs task force under the Marcelo Ele II.

The [illegible] about the Japanese police many years ago. A policeman in a town far from Tokyo raped a housewife while he was patrolling his beat.

As a consequence, the offending cop's immediate superiors and the town's police chief command have lost [illegible]. The mayor of the town resigned.

I'm not saying Quezol should commit suicide to shame. The least he can do is ask to be relieved for incompetence.

ON TARGET
EARNEST TAYO

Quezol's anti-drugs task force chief, Supt. Jerry Valiente, is allegedly his fair haired boy. Valiente raided drug dens in Cavite, way out of his jurisdiction, but who wasn't he able to touch the 66 drug dens inside the Mapayapa Compound in Pasig?

* * *

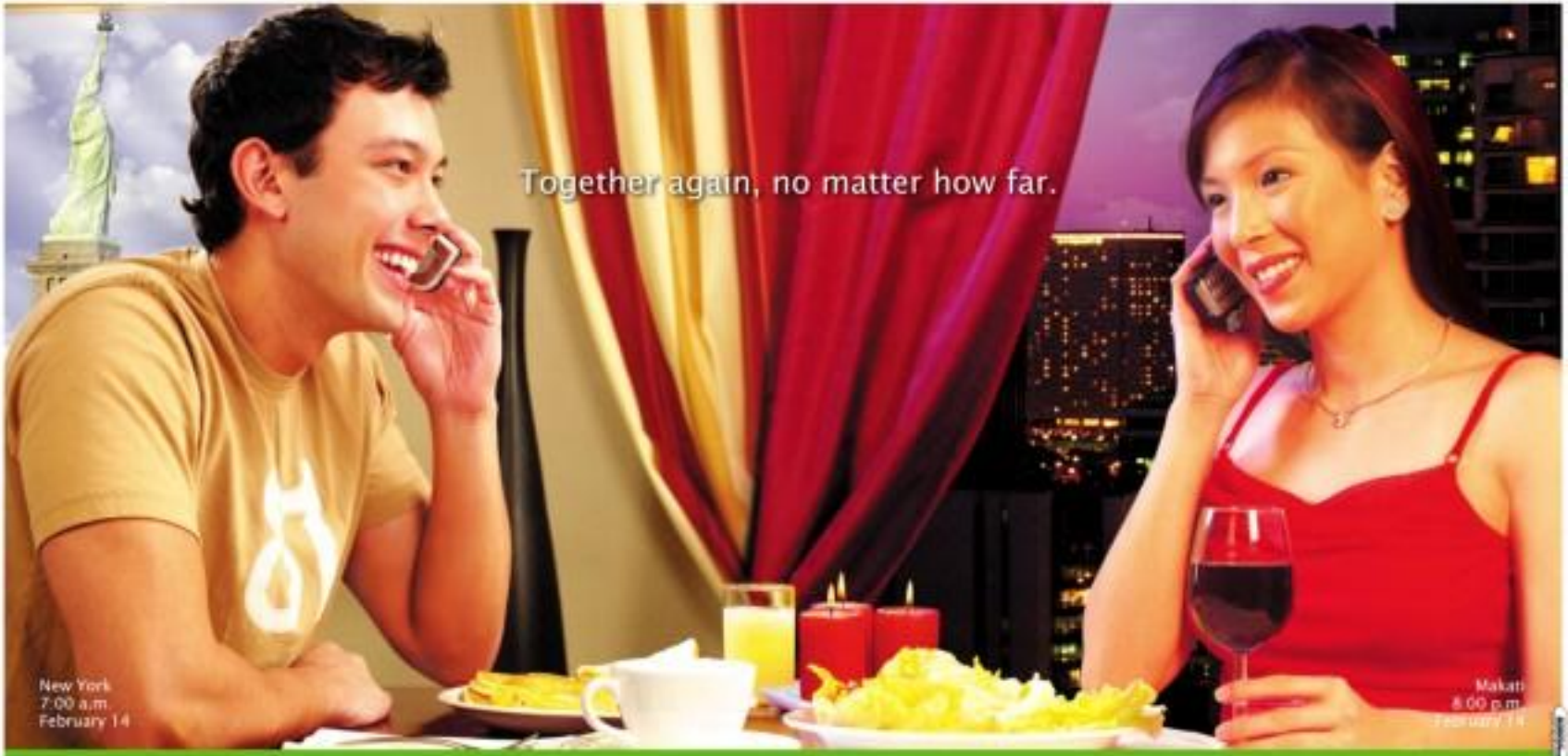
Of course, the persons to be blamed for the existence of the shabu free market are Medina, Pasigueños chief, and Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela, director of the Eastern Police District (EPD).

The EPD headquarters is only a few minutes away from the flea market for drugs.

In this country, only the small fry get to be punished for wrongdoing. The big fish get only a slap on the wrist.

Director General Art Lomibao, PNP chief, told me that he would order Medina's relief if the raid yielded positive results. He told me this as we were going over the raid together with my brother Ernie and Dir. Marcelo Ele. Lomibao repeated this to me at the shabu flea market after it was raided by 100 fully armed police commandos and members of Ele's national anti-drugs task force. Lomibao scolded Medina at the scene.

But to far, only the police community product chief, a mere inspector (police lieutenant), was sacked along with his men.



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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Editor Teddyboy S. Melendrez

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MVP Tangkay out of Finals decider

PBL punishes temperamental Painter

By Jaymiel W. Payo

THE LEAGUE'S MOST VALUable Player will be missing the most important game of the conference.

Rain or Shine will be without Jojo Tangkay when the Elasto Painters and the Magnolia Wizards clash in the winner-take-all Game 5 of the PBL Unity Cup title showdown on Thursday at the San Andres Gym.

The Commissioner's Office suspended the Painters' main man yesterday for committing his second unsportsmanlike foul in the series.

Tangkay, named MVP just last week, punched Magnolia's top gunner Arwind Santos in the nose in the closing seconds of Game 4 last Sunday. The Wizards won the match in overtime, 94-87, to tie the best-of-five series at 2-all.

GAME THURSDAY
5 pm — Rain or Shine vs Magnolia
(Game 5, Finals)

In Game 3, Tangkay was also slapped with an unsportsmanlike foul after also hitting Jamaican the face.

"I point me to unground Jojo, who is the MVP of the conference, but I have to enforce the rules of the league," said commissioner Chito Trinidad in a statement. "He should not have done it, he had already been given a warning."

The commissioner also warned Tangkay, who was fined a mere P600, that competition will warrant a lifetime ban from the league.

Still, coach Caloy Garcia believes the Painters, who have a 2-0 lead in the title series, have enough in their offensive arsenal to remain competitive in Thursday's do-or-die showdown.

"Without without Tangkay, we are going to play our game on Thursday," said Garcia.

Tangkay led the league in scoring with an average of 18.02 points in the elimination round. His numbers dipped dramatically in the finals series, averaging only 8.3 points and 8.7 rebounds.

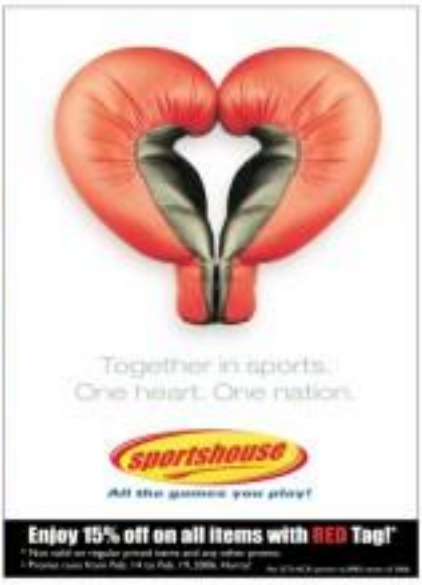
The 5-foot-11 veteran, though, regained his form in Game 4 by leading the Painters with a team-high 16 markers.

"There was no intention on the part of Jojo to hit Arwind," Painters' team manager Boy Lapid said in a statement. "We instructed our players to make a quick foul in the hope that they will retain their chances.

"We did not intend to harm anybody."

The Painters were on the verge of claiming their second straight title and seventh overall after winning Game 1 (73-68 in overtime) and Game 2 (75-73) of the series. But the Wizards fought back in Game 3 (88-70) before that Game 4 (87-87 while overtime.

FOR punching Magnolia's Arwind Santos (wins) in so many games, Jojo Tangkay (above) will miss the all-or-nothing Game 5.



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PFF head says 'godfather' behind ouster conspiracy

By Mussing A. Castillo

SO MUCH THAN THE FOOTBALL GODFAther, Jose Vito Bautista, is behind moves to oust Johnny Romualdez as president of the Philippine Football Federation.

This was mentioned in a press statement handed out by Romualdez to the bureau-of-festival-affairs yesterday.

It said PFF "sources" reported of a secret gathering hosted by Bautista, among others, provincial association presidents to hear out Asian Football Confederation official Cesar Fernandez' gripes against the PFF.

Romualdez, the former president of both the Philippine Olympic Committee and the national women's football federation, blasted the PFF last week for its failure to send the RP women's Under-19 team to a world qualifying tournament in Thailand next month.

Bautista said the non-participation was a result of the "PFF's negligence" in not being able to forward the Philippines' entry form to the tournament on time.

Bautista admitted to the bureau in a telephone interview last night that he indeed hosted the gathering, but he said that the meeting did not discuss anything about Romualdez's possible ouster.

He said the group talked about how to make Romualdez "a proper president."

"We don't want to kick him (Romualdez) out, we want to make him become a proper president," said Bautista, also the president of the national Capital Region Football Association.

ROMUALDEZ

"Ayaw namin ng gulo (we don't want trouble). We just want to say our piece."

Romualdez said Laguna's Arturo Pacificador, Cebu's Jonathan Medero and Rizal's Imigdio Dagatan III were the football association presidents present during the meeting.

The statement said Romualdez took the opportunity to also "gripe about the PFF" and that Alcantara, a member of the PFF board, is "known to always play both sides."

Romualdez said Bautista's group intends to oust the PFF Congress scheduled Feb. 25 in Iloilo as a political move.

The statement also pointed out that Bautista had reneged on his pledge to release P15 million for the SEA Games in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games last month after Romualdez "refused to heed his (Bautista's) advice to bring in Grandson Austal Cauilan and re-route (the venue) to Baguio, instead of Cebu."

PFF competitions director Nilden Ananta said that Romualdez still has the numbers and any move to oust him "will only serve to further stain his office for the 105 election scheduled for 2007."

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Gonzales, Sanchez down French foes

FILIPINO GRANDMASTER CANDIDATE JAY-ARIES Gonzales bested French John Hasticrainc in the final of the 30th International Cannes Open festival tourney at the Palais festival Hall in Cannes, France.

Gonzales, the country's top scorer in the 2004 Chess Olympiad, handled the white pieces with precision to prevail in 41 moves of an English Opening and join compatriots and three-boned IM Joey Antonio among the early leaders.

Sanchez, a native of Cebu City and former trainer of Filipino GM Mark Paragua, also handled white to beat another local player in 33 moves of a Caro-Kann defense while senior player GM Nelson Mariano rounded the quartet to a drawn after 32 moves of a Sicilian Defense.

"Barely makaka ko sa dito ang bahay GM score ko para makumplete na ang GM norms ko if hopping to get my final GM norm (where to complete any GM norms)," said the 32-year-old Gonzales through text message.

Gonzales' first GM result came in the 2004 Cebu Open where he finished third with 7.6 points in nine rounds. He fell half a point off a three-way tie for first place with GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. and Filipino-American GM Jayson Gonzales.

He earned his second GM result in the Asian Zonal eliminations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, last September.

Among the favorites are GM Igor Miladinovic of Serbia and Montenegro (GK 2507), GM Sergey Sokolchuk of Ukraine (2599) and GM Ivan Sarotsenic also of Serbia and Montenegro (2586). Marlon Bernardino, contributor

Patriots repulse Jaguars

THE LA SALLE DAS [illegible] series opener from a shoulder in the third period and earned Jose De Philippine School of Business Administration Jaguars, 89-82, yesterday in the 13th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball tournament at the Olivarez College gym.

JB Bautista (tied 21 points to spark DSJP) [illegible] triumph in one quarter.

Earlier, Art Aellos unloaded 16 points to lead National College of Business and Arts to an 87-77 decision of Abdul Computer College.

The Arellano University Heralds, former and the St. Francis Dawn also stayed undefeated.

Jessica Martinez sank 16 points for the Pharing Arrows, who dominated to their eighth straight win with an 80-66 swatting of Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

Michael Mabaso scored 21 points for the Storm, who notched their seventh straight win at the expense of NCBA, 88-68. In women's play, the 18th Lady Admirals downed PUP 69-52.

2 unlikely heroes for Purefoods

TWO PUREFOODS REJECTS, SETH SEIPETTLE IN A PBA DEbut, played like grizzled veterans in the Giants' 102-97 win over the Red Bulls in Sunday's Game 5 of the San Mig Coffee Puerto Commonwealth Cup title showdown.

Rookie Jondan Salvador and sophomore guard Paul Artadi came through with clutch plays when they mattered most to help the Giants score a breakthrough win in the series, and avoid falling into a 0-3 hole where no team in the 30-year history of the title playoffs has come out of.

Throw into the starting unit in lieu of Hans Thiele, Salvador, and Ilustrisimo, Artadi, provided instant energy in the backcourt, providing the leadership and spunk during a decisive stretch in the first half that allowed Purefoods to take control.

"There was a surprise package in this frame 3," said Purefoods Olympian coach Ryan Gregorio. "Somebody whom I have not used for a long time has delivered the goods for us.—Paul Artadi.

"Maybe you have forgotten Paul Artadi but he can single-handedly break Red Bull's press."

The former University of the East star held Gin-ana even against the Bulls' bevy of point guards, contributing six points, four assists and two steals while coming off the bench.

The two gave Purefoods breathings and the key hits that allowed the Giants' bench to outscore its counterpart for the first time in the best-of-seven title showdown, 31-21.

PEEPHOLE GAME: Paul Artadi dukes off Red Bull's Topex Robinson in Game 3.

CSA spikers a win away from crown

COLEGIO SAN AGUSTIN (CSA) DEFEATED Ateneo de Zobolenko, 25-2, 25-6, to sweep the elimination round and move a win shy of clinching the championship (Competition) division crown of the 11th Women's Volleyball League Sunday at the Ateneo Blue Arena gym in Quezon City.

The Chartered Blue Whings-based squad will face to the finals slated Feb. 26 the Ateneo Preparatory School (APS), a team they have swept in the elimination rounds.

The APS crew finished the second champ-ondship berth after repulsing pesky Ferrels Learning Center, 25-22, 25-13.

Quirimit rules Tour qualifying time trial race

MIKEL Quirimit

ANIEL QUIRIMIT, THE 2000 TOUR GIANNI, topped the individual time trial of the 2006 Tour Filipinas qualifying in Tagaytay City yesterday, clocking one hour, 12 minutes and 47.71 seconds over the 43-kilometer terrain.

Michael Reyes, another Tour veteran, was second in 1:13:56.97 and Rene Glenn was third in 1:14:05.62 on the second day of qualifying for the country's 10-stage Tour scheduled from April 20 to 30 in Luzon.

Rounding out the top 10 in the TT hosted by Tagaytay City Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino and organized by the Philippine National Cycling Association headed by Nepomuceno were Anthony Morelo (1:14:30.90), Sonny Bernadino (1:15:04.74), Dean Sinclair (1:15:11.32), Joel Calleton (1:15:31.75), Johnny Bonifacio (1:15:38.29), Anthony Morelo (1:16:05.38) and Reynaldo Navarro (1:16:06.49).

Bobi Barrios ruled the first day of qualifying—a 107.4-km mixed start race.

A total of 160 riders raced in the two-day qualifying for the Tour which is being organized anew by Ben Lo, founder of the Cagayan Valley cycling jolt in this year's Tour marked Sary Mercene Montilla, the 2005 champion, Frederick Feliciano, Hyzer Tangalin, several mid-level players respectively, scoring results Reuben Sambrano.

Cantada corners Konica—and how

SOMETIME AGO... WHEN IT DIDN'T ... I HEARD someone say, "That guy will never win a major tournament."

The "someone" who said that was then one of the country's leading lights in Philippine golf. He still is.

The "guy" he was referring to is none other than Gerard Cantada.

I didn't understand that "someone" for disregarding Gerard. Gerard was an overweight youngster? I think he could really win a big one.

But then, in 2003, Gerard almost won the Philippine Open at Pinoy Plaza. He had rounded the opening round leaders before eventually finishing a spirited fourth.

Too bitter what Gerard, overweight then as he still is today, did after receiving his prize of P200,000?

He gave half of it to the mistress of the Mission Hospital employee that year.

Had mixed signals been received by Gerard's kindness that the following year he made Gerard the winner of the 3rd Konica Manila National Pro-Am, which was then known as the Ultra/Winco National Pro-Am, at the Riviera Golf Club in Silang, Cavite. Gerard did it with his amateur partner, Dr. Empino of Bacolod.

Other than God's intervention, what seems to be the message of all of this?

But don't judge anyone by his opponents. Let the bitter mentor that you don't judge a book by its cover.

But a lot of factors first before I proceed discussing on Cantada's improbable feat as a 300 lb-plus athlete.

The Pro-Am was born in 1998 at Fort Bonifacio with Jesse Corpuz as host. He has been hitting one ball obviously it died in 1998 when Fort Bonifacio was privatized. It was revived by U-Bix Corp. chair and CEO

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendiola

Ben Bence in 2001 in partnership with the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Of course, nobody was surprised when Ben Bence, a topnotch lawyer, took it upon himself to revive and personally bankroll the fabled event. He has staged three big tournaments in the Nineties at the Manila Golf Club, Wack Wack and Manila Southwoods where he almost single-handedly held the NGAP-organized 1997 Philippine Open.

Bill Dampil and Ernie Vinluan were the U-Bix Writers Pro-Am in 2001, followed by Red and Paul Millsaps in 2002.

When Cantada and Tampinco won in 2003, everybody dismissed the feat as "pure luck." Again, Cantada's weight was the culprit.

The tournament was scrapped in 2004 chiefly to add that year's purse to the 2005 edition to announced purse of P1.5 million.

Again, Cantada weighed 300 lb-plus in 2005.

Again, Cantada won the tournament with Tampinco in 2005.

Nevermind how weak the tournament three is a how since its first 36 will ages ago.

Thus, when the 300 lb-plus Cantada and Tampinco were the 5th Konica Manila Pro-Am at Riviera's Canyon last Saturday, everybody stopped talking.

Suddenly, Cantada wasn't just a winner three successive times. Together with Tampinco, Cantada also wrenches Pro-Am history by becoming the tournament's first winners three in a row.

Oh, yes, the legendary Ben Arda won it six times—the most by anyone. But not three straight, even though he won it three times on three different years with the same departed Dominguez Espinosa.

"I can't believe that I became winning a three straight times," said Tiba Tolentino, 66, the acknowledged father of the Pro-Am, who contemplated the unique event in 1986.

So, why not size—I'm not weight—matters in golf?

"Size. I was taken to Gerard," said the city cop, but Ateneo, smiling, minutes after Gerard had surged out of the 18th green of Riviera. "Like Gerard, I own a wide body, too. And, like Gerard, I haven't quit playing golf."

You can't say that again, Kabsat Bart.

Didn't John Daly, an iconic and almost as heavy as Gerard Cantada, win both the PGA Championship and British Open?

Size the size, not weight, but the saying... and how.

* * *

BIRTHDAY. My gratitude to Luis Paul Isa, Quinito Henson and that celeb, pay per view wizard, Benito Uy, for texting in the course regarding tickets I needed for The Zombies concert last night at the Resorts World. Sorry, not to mention, all of you, Steve O'Neal, Lolo, a regular at Solar Sports in Entertainment, had tried hard else to supply me with tickets to the lusty Williams. How sweet and for which I am most thankful again... Also tonight, Richard Meth is presenting my a private birthday dinner at Meth's in Greenhills 2 Mokkel, Ghosts!

* * *

Comments: e-mail: sports@inquirer.net

RP Marlboro team survives ordeal

TREAT FOR SELF

This was the biggest Asian Spinnerbo Lita, a 27-year-old computer programmer, learned when she joined the Philippine squad to the Marlboro Adventure Team odyssey in the behalf-ding desert expanse of Moab, Utah, recently.

Ten grueling days of extreme open-sense exercise the mining can pushed Lita to remember all, makes she initially thought she could not handle.

Tough: trekking, biking on mountain paths and rapid riders, rappelling, rowing and long treks were among the activities Lita and four other Filipinos, along with other adventure seekers from across the globe, had to complete for the 10th edition of the MAT in a non-competitive atmosphere.

"Before, I didn't really push myself to the limit," said Lita. "I asked myself, 'Kaya ko ba 'to?' Baka sumuko ako sa hunger (Aku 'tap sa dan' I might fall in the course.)"

It helped that fellow Filipino MAT participants John Gilmore, Pepsi Gonzales, Mickey Chiong Imson and Reggie Catalbas, as well as the star dads, were there to goad and hunt her up.

But it was the thought of capturing the same prize mind boggling smile that spurred her on.

Gonzales, Gilmore, Lim, Chiongbian and Catalbas stood out among some 35,000 Filipinos who tried for slots in the Philippine squad to the Moab odyssey and were screened with the advantage of Philip Morris which shouldered all their expenses.

Philip Morris Phils. Manufacturing Inc. managing director Chin Nelson and Marlboro brand manager Eric Cunanding and some sort of the 15 finalists will be formed to serve the experience.

Lita is an outdoor adventure enthusiast, having conquered several mountains locally. "But MAT was a different scale," she said. "Solving great accomplishment. It was awesome."

Valiente said he and the rest of his teammates were happy to see Lita complete a tough survival stage with the most male participants had trouble climbing.

"She was on the verge of tears from the sandal, but she didn't quit," said Valiente. At 90 spins, who together with Lita was assigned to a team with other foreign participants. The three other Filipinos were departed to other squads.

Like the rest other teammates, Lita said the hot, cold fatigue—aside from the hunger—of not several days without a shower ...almost disopposed every time they took a breather to appreciate the jaw-unique and magnificent views of Moab and the surrounding National Parks reaching elevations of 6,000 feet.

"The experiences helped me appreciate," she said. "I learned that I could really talk to people, and that we had a lot in common with people from other countries. [It's a hunger] sal, mattress. It's as if I had to eat."

FILIPINO computer programmer Spinnerbo Lita pulls her backpack across a canyon in Moab, Utah. Inset, riders negotiate a desert trail.

BATANGAS MILO 21K

Desamito upsets favored Ballester

MEDALLING: Desamito (left) and Ballester vie for top spot.

BATANGAS CITY — ESTER-an Bernardo Desamito Jr. showed up former champion Allan Ballester's wake the 21K men's qualifying race of the 20th National Milo Marathon here Sunday.

Desamito and Ballester notched totals from the start line the 2000 and 2001 Milo Marathon winner rallied by comps with 1.5 kilometers to go, allowing the eventual regional champion to pull away.

The runners-up behind here Bernie is the 10K race of the Tabiles Run In Kalilayan last week in Manila, Desamito finished Espiritu's race in one hour, nine minutes and 46 seconds to pocket the P30,000 payment.

He also transcends the national finals at Dec. 3 Mindanao, who salvaged second in 1:10:11 and third places Michael Castillo (1:11:13).

"I don't know why I suffered cramps because I'm in shape," said the 31-year-old Ballester, an Filipino. "But I promise to do well in the finals."

Bohlayer, the 2005 SEAGeod Asian Games marathon champion, pocketed 30,000 while Cruda got P6,000.

Meanwhile, 19-year-old Marcel Mogales topped the ladies' qualifying of the annual feat was held in partnership with Shoreline Dash Inc. Mil Media, Gilo Pacific, ACDelco and Powerbar.

Already the winner of the 5K Tabiles Run In Kalilayan last Saturday, Mogales completed the 21K course in 1:30.39 to capture her first leg in the twelve Milo Marathon and qualify to the finals.

Mogales, who is from Pasay, will be competing for the first time in the Finals along with Lizi Uddin and Betty Sandoz. Both placed second in 1:30:58 while Sandoz was third in 1:31:56.

Batangas City Mayor Eddie Dimacuha fired the gun that flagged off about 1,600 runners.

Topping the 5K Fun run were Mark Perez, Jessie Bulliel and Dinah Gabol (men) and Ruby Galura Christine Delfin and Hildeth Dilo (women).

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SPORTS

Heat melt Pistons as Wade sizzles

HAZE: Ginebra's Jayjay Helterbrand

NEW YORK—DWYANE WADE SANK THE GAME-WINNING BASKET with 2.3 seconds left on the clock to give the Miami Heat a 100-99 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday.

Wade scored 27 points, including the Heat's last 17, as Miami rallied to beat the Pistons for the first time this season.

Rasheed Wallace finished with 27 points and 16 rebounds for Detroit, which lost for the first time in seven games.

Wade hit a 15-foot jumper with 2.3 seconds left to break a 99-99 tie. Wade's basket with 10 seconds left gave Miami a 98-97 lead, but Detroit's Richard Hamilton missed a jumper at the buzzer.

Wade finished 11-for-22 from the field and 5-for-9 from the free line, handing Detroit coach Flip Saunders his first loss in seven games since taking over the Pistons on Dec. 23.

Wade hit a 15-foot jumper from the left side with 2.3 seconds left to break a 99-99 tie. Wade's basket with 10 seconds left gave Miami a 98-97 lead, but Detroit's Richard Hamilton missed a jumper at the buzzer.

Wade finished 11-for-22 from the field and 5-for-9 from the free line, handing Detroit coach Flip Saunders his first loss in seven games since taking over the Pistons on Dec. 23.

"It was fun," Wade said after the game. "That was supposed to be a play for Shaq, but they doubled him, so I just tried to get to the basket. I'm glad it went in."

Shaquille O'Neal added 21 points for the Heat, who had lost seven straight on the road.

The Pistons stretched their lead to 89-71 after three quarters, before Miami staged their biggest comeback of the season.

Miami finally tied the game at 99-99 on Wade's basket with 10 seconds left. Detroit then missed a pair of shots before the Heat got the ball back with 20 seconds left, setting the stage for Wade's game-winning 16-footer.

The Pistons had one last chance but Rasheed Wallace's 3-point attempt missed at the final buzzer.

Chauncey Billups scored 29 points and had 13 assists to lead Detroit, losers of three of their last five.

"Everyone took the game away," Pistons coach Flip Saunders said. "He got a lot of shots up and we couldn't get any help over."

Richard Hamilton added 25 points for Detroit (42-9), while Rasheed Wallace scored 23 points.

Miami, which improved to 31-20, held the Pistons to just 14 points in the fourth quarter.

In Boston, Paul Pierce scored 31 points as the Celtics beat the Orlando Magic 102-94, while Shawn Kemp scored 20 points as the Seattle SuperSonics beat the Indiana Pacers 92-86 in Indianapolis.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas scored 37 points as the Wizards beat the Philadelphia 76ers 107-97 and the Raptors beat the Portland Trail Blazers 114-113 in Toronto.

In East Rutherford, Vince Carter scored 24 points as the New Jersey Nets beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 96-79. Reuters

HEAT STATS: P. 1.a.—See detailed stats. Cleveland-Orlando at 1 a.m.

CKS forges title clash with Xavier

CHANG KAI SHEK COLLEGE HARRIES OF Jobar King to drown St. Jude College, 80-68, and gain the second finals berth in the Metro Manila Thing Line Basketball Association (MBTLBA) Hillcrest Cup basketball championship at the UMG gym in Manila.

The 5-foot-11 King fired 29 points as Chang Kai Shek forged a best-of-three championship with rocky Philippine Science School. Game 1 is scheduled today.

Alexander Wong and Justin Sioson Chua, a 6-4 prized recruit from Bacolod City, added 23 points between them for Chang Kai Shek as coach Sammy Co rode roans and tore Just Yap.

Carl Gai Bautista with 20 points for St. Jude, which failed to outshoot death march with a 41-30 win over Chang Kai Shek last week.

Xavier School ousted De La Salle Bacolod by beating UBO High, 77-58, in the other crossover match.

Leading the charge for the British Association United Xavier set 6-5 center Bernard John Silverhead Cesario 15, 5 guard Charles Austin

TOP JUDOKA: Korean Hwa-Tae Hwang (left) slams French Mehdidi Khaldoun down in their under-90 kg category men's final at the Paris judo tournament, Feb. 12 in the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy. Hwang won the gold medal. AFP

Nat'l Muaythai starts March 18

THE WORLD MUAYTHAI FEDERATION PHILIPPINES (WMF-Phils) will be holding the 2006 National Muaythai Championships in March 4 at the Intramuros Sports Complex in Quezon City. The event is being held to select members of the Philippine Team that will compete in the 3rd World Muaythai Championships set from March 20 to 26 in Thailand.

Entries must be submitted to WMF-Phils at Rm# of Unit 7-D, Victoria 1 Bldg., 129 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Vil., Makati City or fax 02-8926276 and at JC-159 Beatrix Emperador, La Trinidad, Benguet, 074-4224561 cell 0916-2269511, 0920-2927556 Email: wmf.phils@gmail.com

WORLD RECORD: Olympic and world pole vault champion Yelena Isinbayeva of Russia sets a new world record in Donetsk, Ukraine, Feb. 3. Isinbayeva raised her own world record by a centimeter to 4.91 meters. AFP

Australia, US bets advance

LONDON—AUSTRALIAN MICHAEL CHEN Gwennet moved his country to a 3-2 victory over Switzerland in their Davis Cup World Group first round tie on Sunday.

The 20-year-old, playing only his second Davis Cup tie, beat George Bastl for the fifth rubber to put the 28-time champions ahead for quarter-finals.

Australia, who were ranked ninth, Hewitt world number one Lleyton Hewitt, beat Bohdan in the last night after they pulled off a shock 4-1 win over 2004 winners Spain on clinch.

Belarus, along with Andrey Cousins, Argentina, Chile, France and Russia, had made sure of their progress after Saturday's doubles rubbers.

The United States joined them on Sunday when Andy Roddick routed past replacement Ivo on Sabau to give his side a winning 3-1 lead over Romania in San Diego.

Former world number one Roddick, who rounded on court during his five-set defeat by Andrei Pavel on Friday, won 6-3 6-3 6-2 against the world number 112.

Sabau replaced Romanian number one Victor Hanescu, who was injured during Saturday's doubles rubbers.

The United States will now host Chile, who have an unassailable 3-0 lead over last year's finalists Slovakia on the clay in Santiago.

Australia's Lleyton Hewitt beat Rusedski 7-5 6-3 7-6, after Stanislas Wawrinka had kept the hosts, minus world number one Roger Federer, in the running with a win over Peter Luczak to level the score at 2-2. Quarter-final ties take place from Apr. 7 to 9. Reuters

Oberholser makes breakthrough

PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA—A LUCKY break at the par-four 15th helped Aaron Oberholser settle his finishing nerves and go on to secure a five-under victory in the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am on Sunday.

The 31-year-old American, who was standing under mounting pressure on the back nine at the Pebble Beach Golf Links, pushed his drive well right and searched in his ball located near on a cart path before ending up to the left at a tree.

From there, with an opening to the green, he struck his second shot to within four and took the birdie putt to restore his five-shot lead over his closest challenger, South African Ernie Els.

Californian Oberholser passed the last three holes for a level-par 72 to win his maiden PGA Tour title at a course he has known since he was a teenager.

A former college student at the nearby San Jose State University he went to Pebble Beach for the first time to watch the 1982 US Open with a friend.

"We watched the first round and saw Greg Norman (Australia), Hirsch Couples and Tom Watson a few holes," he recalled. "I remember that like it was yesterday.

Oberholser, a rookie champion on the minor US Nationwide Tour who earned $1 million by his victory at the 2004 Hooters Kiawa Golf Championship, believes he can now challenge the game's elite because of an improved mental approach. Reuters

CLUB CHAMPS: Jones Pilar Center's Ignacio Cayanan with his 12-under tournament effort together with Chamber Tournament legend Rudolph Tournament were the weekend at the San Beda Alabang gym. Also shown are Jones Pilar coaches Arnulfo Nepomuceno and Ronnie Yadao with Chamber product manager Ron Moreno, tournament director Edmundo Baldonio and organizer Bernard Ocampo.

Sportswatch

CKSC, Philadelphia arrange showdown

CHANG KAI SHEK COLLEGE (CKSC) MANILA (METROPOLITAN SCHOOL 40-30) BEAT Philadelphia High School (Philippine Christian Institute, 30-21, to arrange a best-of-three championship showdown for the 2nd Metro Basketball League Basketball Tournament 2006. The first game of the finals will be held on Feb. 17 at the Tarlac College Basketball Court. Francis Peter Tan and Kenneth Tadeleon scored 17 and 15 points, respectively, to lead the CKSC Manila Metropolitan Schools to victory in the finals for the third straight year, at the other game, Philadelphia Presbyterian Christ Student's 20 points to reach the finals for the first time. Jan Rasco and Rolando Edwards will dispute championship on Feb. 16.

Campomanes heads appeals jury

HONORARY WORLD CHESS FEDERATION (FIDE) PRESIDENT FLORENCIO CAMPOMANES has been named head of the appeals jury in the 37th Chess Olympiad set May 19 to June 3 in Turin, Italy, in making Campomanes' appointment Feb. president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov said the Filipino's experience in the FIDE hierarchy is an asset to world chess. The Turin Olympiad marks Campomanes' 20-year anniversary as world chess, starting from the Philippines' first participation in Mexico in 1966. Campomanes said a Philippine team composed of himself, national master Champion Rodolfo Tan Cardoso and national masters Ulysses Baldoza and Cortes Bordal. Campomanes' three historical achievements included, Filipino team members and individual in front of the total 1966 to 1982 in 1986.

MUSP, PSI launching reset

THE LAUNCHING OF THE MASTERS UNITED SPORTS PROGRAM (MUSP) AND THE participation opening ceremonies of the Philippine Sports Institute (PSI) at 4:00 p.m. at Philsports in Pasig City. It was held on March 20-27, the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) announced yesterday. "In light of the stampede in Philsports last Feb. 4 which left 74 people dead and hundreds injured, the PSC is observing a 40-day mourning period in the Filipino tradition of honoring the dead," said Richard Gordon said. The tournament was originally scheduled on Feb. 16-17.

Manuela Fairview tennis club proxy

MANUELA FAIRVIEW AND MATRIA A. ANG-ELIZETES PRESIDENT OF THE OLD NORTH Forbes Tennis Club during its membership meeting. Other officers elected were Tony Mercado, vice-president; Eddie Ortiz, secretary; Dr. Noel Rivera, treasurer; Tony Cruz, auditor; and Danny de los Santos, Bibbo Bellosillo, Nelly Mendez, Jess Fernandez, Ely Zapanta and Dr. Vicente Gutierrez, directors. The new officers will be sworn in by former Senator Orly Pilar. Check Mobby on Feb. 16.

AIM President's Cup Feb. 18

THE ALUMNI NOTE OF MANAGEMENT MAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION-PHILIPPINES Chapter and the Ateneo MD Manila is set for hosting the AIM Presidents Cup 2006, on Feb. 18 at the Pamagang Complex Golf Club, Makati, Central. Metro. The event is part of a three-day affair that would bring together golf tournament at the golf. The event will take place Feb. 18, and to open to the public golfers, corporate golfers. For details, call (632) 892-4011 locals 2103, 2108, 2109 or 203 or email: cmalig@aimalumni.edu or aimalumni.edu.

WINTER OLYMPICS

French daredevil cops downhill gold

TURIN—CHAMPAGNE FLOWED in the Italian Alps on Sunday after Bode Miller's downhill triumph drove Austrian Benjamin Raich to distraction and Canada's Jeff Hamilton to drink.

Miller, the overall World Cup champion, won the men's downhill by 0.08 seconds from Raich, who had to settle for silver but still finished ahead of Austria's Hermann Maier, who was third.

Miller's victory was the first for the United States in the Alpine skiing events at the Winter Olympics since Picabo Street won the women's downhill in 1998.

Hamilton, the first Canadian to finish, was left cringing and shaking his head in disbelief after he crossed the line in 1:46.32, 0.08 seconds behind Miller's time.

Hamilton, who had been the last skier to start, was in the finish area when Miller crossed the line and he knew he had lost the gold medal.

"I was in the finish area when Bode came down and I knew I was in trouble," Hamilton said. "I knew I had to go fast and I knew I had to go for it. I knew I had to go for it and I knew I had to go for it."

Miller's victory was the first for the United States in the Alpine skiing events at the Winter Olympics since Picabo Street won the women's downhill in 1998.

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SECOND PLACERS: PSC Commissioner Jose Conrado Benitez congratulates the team of Jr. Scholastica Manganese Dimaculangan composed of Princess Marie Santos, Lea Antonette Bonanagan and Andrea Marie Santos for placing second in the inter-school sprint division competition of the Lakeshore National Triathlon Championship in Metro Pampanga. Lakeshore chairman/CEO architect Nestor Mangio awards the tens.

ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail to: entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Lito Zulueta & Yolanda

Cowboys in the closet

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

FOR GAY PEOPLE WHO FEEL UNDER-REPresented in mainstream cinema, "Brokeback Mountain" just might usher in a more open-minded age. The film's success—from being a critic and audience favorite at multiple Oscar nomination—have underscored the strengths of the gay cowboy movie, and it won't be long until the rest of Hollywood jumps on the band wagon. While not a revolutionary experience, that film brings an epic-like romance endeavor to life, dissecting a still-touchy subject with beautiful performances from its mostly young cast.

Versatile Ang Lee is upstairs for it, as the film, (rather but sensitively tackled homosexuality before, in the 1993 drama "The Wedding Banquet." But—if the final style is characterized by maximizing shots—it may seem that the first 20 minutes are devoted to stock shots of massive mountains and flocks of sheep walking mellowly—but he also focuses on the mostly non-verbal exchange between two hunky cowboys in love. Jake Gyllenhaal, as Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal), an orphan from Wyoming who in the early 1960s, discover and explore their sexuality on the mountain terrains of Brokeback Mountain.

Escape

Ostensibly, the movie relieves the real-life pathos of gay men forced to stay in the closet by fingers-wagging homophobes. The heroes, like many gay people we know, try to move on by marrying their girlfriends, spiritually and romantically played by Michelle Williams and Anne Hathaway, in "fishing buddies," however, Ennis and Jack escape their unhappy family lives from time to time.

JAKE and Heath Ledger: A sad and beautiful tale

As with many supposedly forbidden romances, their secret union can only end in tears. And weep with them, too do. Ledger, Gyllenhaal, Williams and Hathaway who, not too long ago, all starred in some generic romantic-comedy movies or soaps, show more enthusiasm and depth (not to mention, skin) with these more mature roles. This career-shaping turning point illustrates their range, as each of them surges with passion, longing, disappointment and, in Ennis' case, self-loathing.

Ledger truthfully and very capably plays a role that may seem Hollywood's (more than) final disowning. While his first secret squelched up scene hints, and his subdued old-guy make-up isn't that convincing in later scenes, we believe him, remember, and share in his quiet moments of unseen emotion. "Brokeback" is rife with them, making its welcome segment as a (still hot) beautiful tale of expression and rebellion.

Their secret can only end in tears—and we weep with them

Will 'Brokeback' break SM ban?

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THE QUESTION WAS POSED POINTED BY FILIPINO Mel Chionglo, former member of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), now member of the Cinema committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts: "Will Ocean Boulevard's 'Brokeback Mountain' serve as the test case for SM's X-10 ban?"

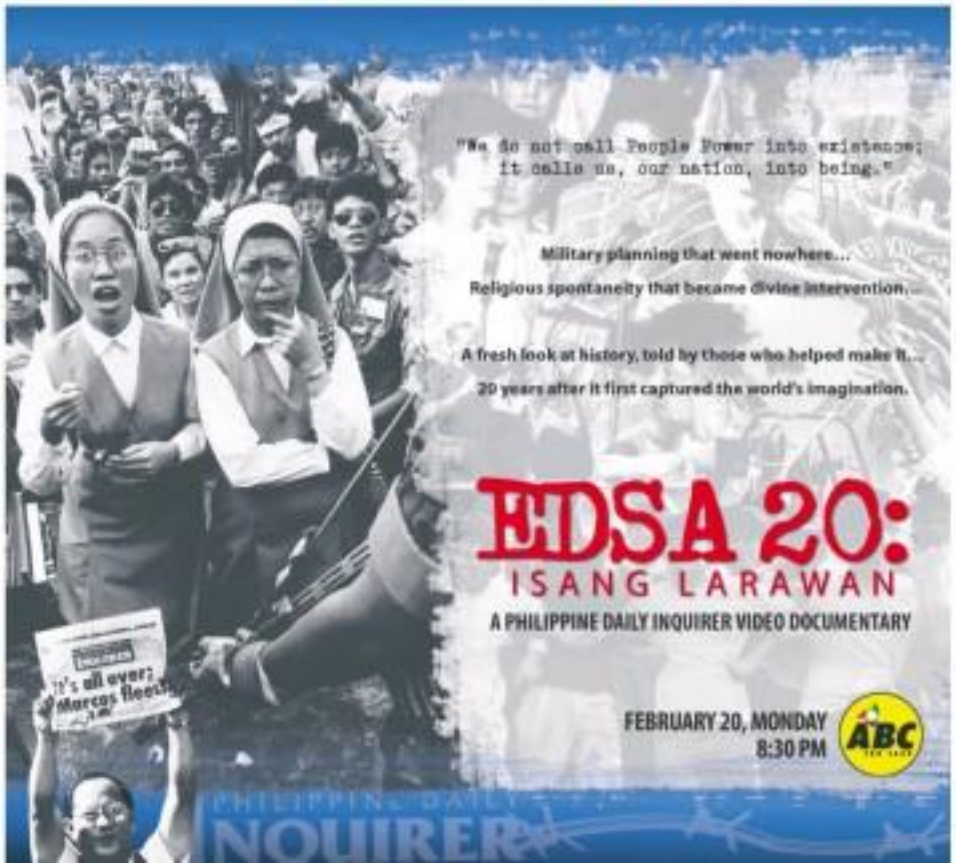
According to Mario Imperial, director for film acquisitions and marketing of Skyflix (local distributor of "Brokeback"), the Ang Lee film was rated R-18 and approved without cuts by the MTRCB.

"True, movies are rarely have a run in SM cinemas, though," Imperial told Inquirer Entertainment. "In any case, it will be shown in Rockwell, Robinsons, Gateway, Greenwood, Blue Wave and Alabang Town Center."

Ric Cavalligan, then vice president of SM Lifestyle Inc. (which operates SM Cinema), said R-18 movies could always appeal with the MTRCB.

Imperial said they had no intention of doing that. "We're quite happy with the payments coming. If we reapply for an R-13, the MTRCB might ask us to cut certain controversial scenes, which we feel are essential to the development of the love story."

Cavalligan said SM would fill in its 10 locations by "If that film becomes a box-office hit." He insisted that "the fathers of adult members of viewers is large audience" was the only reason behind the policy.



'PBB' celebrity housemates an engagingly varied lot

THE "CELEBRITY" EDITION of "Pinoy Big Brother" turns out to be not as popular as expected.

But they're an engagingly varied lot—from actor-model Rudiene Pacilla to actor-playboy Alex Basilio; from hunks Christian Vasquez and Zanjoe Marudo to cute-faggot Rudy Fernandez and singer-comic Sunday Monsalve; from dizzy Winnie Gonzales to pubisti Jeremiah Reyes—etc.

They're definitely more interesting than the unknowns who made up the first batch of "PBB" housemates, to date patient fodder to no small extent for show's current critics.

We also like the reality challenge's "back to basics" style: because it leaves the "celebrities" to live much more simply than they're used to. And the pared-down lifestyle could presage some of them to several aspects of themselves that they've heretofore kept from view.

That could lead to realizations that would expand viewers' understanding of what "celebrity" really is—and isn't.

The invitation of people from different parts of the country could also enrich viewers' appreciation of our range of diverse regional characteristics, which could help explain why we have such a hard time getting our act together as a people.

And living for two months with our fogged Pacific-bound sunsets over the breakwaters, the disbanding of other doubtful people—with the show's viewers booming along with them.

Moreover, the show has gotten off to a shaky start, choosing to base instead on staged viewpoint-involving tours of the housemates, incipient couples here and there, a little tension, and emotional outbursts as some celebrities miss their loved ones.

The show can be much more than this, so we're still in optimism to see it find its proper pace.

We also sense that some celebrity housemates are pacing themselves in terms of full participation in the pro-

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

BIANCA: Classy

ASSANAH: Panchon

gram's selections. The instinctive rule appears to be: the more popular you are, the more you help your host be the moment, to paradoxically more and prodding too early.

The in-show scene, because two resort to a long time, and early favorites could end up letting the dust reach too soon. So, the real celebrities in the batch are benefiting from the expectation that all their powers show before game three.

That could be why the more entertaining of the Barbies, **Julia Perez** and Christine Jacquet really made their mark on the show so fast, which could be another like Rudy, Brenna and Hide Dalao are all over the place, talking a blue streak and "entertaining" anyone in sight.

As for the celebrities who keep sweating themselves so they might not realize that viewers don't sympathize with them—because they know all along that they were in it for the long haul, right? So all those tears during the very first week of the program come off as both immature and self-serving.

'Hearts in Season'

TOGETHER for the first time, '80s divas Janet Basco, Evy Nielsen and Dulce perform in the Valentine concert, "Hearts in Season," at the Manila Peninsula Pagoda Ballroom. Call 776-3388 or 0917-9811333.

Pitch more than 20 years of performing, all three divas are multi-awarded in the field of late concert-tenancy.

Directed by Bert Pascasio, the Valentine show will also feature pianist-singer George Feglo and musical theater performer Miguel Cuaderno.

'American Idol'

THE FIFTH season of "American Idol" is telecast live on Star World every Wednesday and Thursday at 8 p.m., with replays at 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

Arnaldo' travel book

"The Archipelagos Encounters," the latest travel book by Arnaldo McGuinness, was well-received at its launch at Rizal Towers, Rockwell Center, recently.

It is now available at National Bookstore, Powerbooks and other outlets. The book's layout was done by Arnel Pelobillo.

Hilera signs EMI contract

AFTER OUTPERFORMING eight other bands from top schools, Hilera, a trio from Ateneo College, topped the Newsafe Soundcheck series-collegiate band competition.

Last Feb. 8, the group signed a contract with EMI Music.

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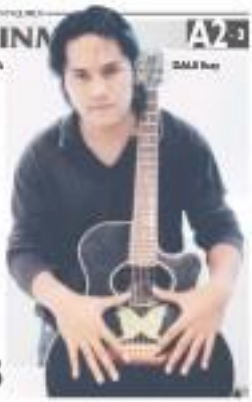

Speaking of surprises

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

FINDING HOPE

It's not easy to like Dale Ong. That is, if your idea of good music is bromides. It's what you at most want to hear, and not what you need to get into, for a change.

On the first hearing, Ong's debut CD "Count Down ... Someday" (Vicor) sounds uncannily trendy, like a songwriter rearranges to demonstrate his prowess. For one thing, it seems like he's out of touch with current issues of pleasure that should've been cobbled or revised because they sometimes don't fit. Ostensibly, most of Ong's lyrics address drama.

But it comes out Ong has so much to say for the depressed, that here or there we relate.

In his songs, Ong meanders, argues and generally talks at length about finding hope in desperation, opportunity in crisis, and truth beneath the lies people go through every day of their lives. And yet he's not preachy.

In the title track (the Latin expression of "Into the day"), the speaker dreams of becoming "better man" but is stuck in procrastination. This implicit message is not something like, "go ahead and do it for Christ sakes," but rather "deep down, in what we you gonna do about it."

Other insights are explicitly laid out among what appears to be pseudo-raves, but the point here really is to listen and hear the sensible reflections of a young man who thinks he can help others help themselves.

Strange yet familiar

Like Ong, it's not easy to like Bob Audlo. That is, if your idea of a good musician is someone who plays all the right riffs and licks at the most appropriate moment.

Audlo is known in the local rock scene as a genius, in the sense that he plays guitar in a refreshingly inventive manner and creates the most wonderful sounding raves at the most unexpected time.

Since the late '80s, he has gained notice as an exciting session guitarist for the likes of Gompers, Joey "Pepe" Smith and dozens of other similarly idiosyncratic artists both on stage and in the recording studio.

But this year, the greatest surprise is that Audlo is finally coming out with his own recorded output. And no, how very 90s indeed, because he said the album will comprise two CDs, sort of an anthology of the songwriter has written in those years.

A rousing sampler titled "Soundcycling" (directly released on the company) yet leather cuts where the aural landscape blooms with splashes of folk, rock, jazz, classical and whatnot, featuring a number of contemporary and veteran musicians in the area including, to our behind, Audlo himself on vocals!

Pleasant experience

Speaking of surprises from veteran musicians, the forthcoming gig of the Hawaiian band Kalapana should offer local fans something more than the usual songs we have known like "The Awe," "Wine Do I Do" and "Wild Bull."

Right, stats surely remember these tunes being covered to death by local bands like Side A, but it would be a pleasant experience to rediscover that the self-titled Kalapana album, where those three aforementioned tracks are found, actually contain eight other beautiful cuts.

Foremost of which are "When the Morning Comes," "Rain Dues," "Naturally" and "You Make It Real"—whose themes of romance and love of nature capture the easygoing vibes that make Hawaiian beaches synonymous. Since a beloved dedication apart from our very own Boracay.

HOJ Jardin

SPIN CITY

But according to its members, Kalapana has recorded some 30 albums since their classic outing. It would be interesting to hear how the other songs sound like—considering that the bandleader describes the classic as lightweight material.

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KALAPANA

ELLA May Saison

KYLA

KALAPANA, THE HAWAII-BASED BAND that popularized the once classic hits "The Rose," "Nightbird," "Don't Hang Up," "Admit It Naturally," and "Are You I'd Be Chasing Rainbows" was in "Kalapana In Paradise," tonight at the PICC Plenary Hall.

Now in Manila—the first performance was last night—are the band's original members Gaylord Ilolonsalo (band leader), Lil Peay, Mahati Bilyeu and Hoagi Isaacs, with additional members Lindsay Zarnek Kapala, Shizuko Sicile Polish and Paula Tuiteo.

Call 891-9999 or 873-7377.

Tonight

•Hogarth Potato presents Ella Mae Saison, in "Souls of Love" at Regalverde, CCP Complex, Roxas Boulevard. Gates 6:30 Tea Symphony with Love in open. Call 425-1917, 09151415-6853, or 09151541-9668.

•"Heaven in Session" with Janet Basco, Jay Valdez, Dulce and Miguel Galvez at the Rondez-Penhouse in Rajahnate Ballroom.

•Ed Sheeran and Courtesy Breakes at Saltcellar.

• 9th Avenue at Virgin Café

• Kasi de las Alas in "Si-sisters" (At left) at Kilometer Amanera

• "Strike By Golly Love" with Aretha and the Soaked Out Band at Mark's Bar Bistro

• The Company® at 19 East Music Hall along South Super Highway from Philippines

• The Tongco Brothers and Marci Sailor at The Fourpaps Plaza Bar at UN Avenue St., Manila. Call 523-2367.

• RJ and Friends at Camp Aguinaldo Theatre for a fund-raising concert for Sony City Smackdown; 8 p.m. Call 899-1108

• Juicy Dean at Manila Pavilion Boulevard Lounge

• Groovework at Tavern on the Square, Greenhills 3

• Jed Madela at Kilometer Cero1 in Las Piñas

Show Time

KYLA

Tomorrow

• Kalapana at the PICC. Call 891-9999 and 871-7377.

• Andy Williams Live! at the Amanera Coliseum

• Kiss A Pano at the Manila Hotel with guests K Brosas and Daniela Panes

• Ramon Suansundo, Yeng Garcia and the Philharmonic Orchestra at the Bond Philippine Plaza

• James Gibbs and Gladys Guevarra at Zobels in "Lovelocuting Bay"

• "Strike By Golly Love" with Aretha and the Soaked Out Band at Mark's Bar Bistro

• OK Tijam at Subsribia

• Freeway at Virgin Café

• Mat de las Alas in "Si-sisters" (At left) at Kilometer Amanera

• The Company® at Webster Bar (Secret) with Bob Hamilton on the acoustic grand piano

• RJ and Friends at the Manila Polo Club; 9 p.m. Call 899-2388

• Lenny Raymundo at Manila Pavilion Boulevard Lounge; 8:30 p.m.

• Rooney Street at Rowers on the Square, Greenhills 3

• Bamboo at Metropolis Star Alabang; 7 p.m.

• Leggiveve Ratings at Texte Bunks, Robinsons Place Manila

• Jose Is A Million's Lenny Duane and Randy Santiago at Rainbo Malate

• "Cuadro King" of Jose Mercado, Shelly Bercades, Jimmy Santos and Francis M at Orbit

Feb. 14

• Nina Paksoy and Freeverse at Subsribia

• Mordecai Virgin Café

• RJ and friends at LA. Café Bar and Restaurant for a fund-raising concert for Sony City Smackdown; 8 p.m. Call 899-2388

• Moments at RJ Cocktail Bar

• Mel Navarro at Manila Pavilion Boulevard Lounge

• Sing-Sgrinkles at Tavern on the Square, Greenhills 3

• E and The Bravos at Rainbo Malate

• Regine Velasquez, Kyla and Annalyn Vicary at Zobels

Feb. 17

• Literatus and Entertation at Subsribia

• Nina and Ring at Virgin Café

• Franchie Dy at Zobels with AJ Dee, Erwin Arellano, Marvin Benitez, Rimex Gonzales, Kim Flores and Erik Santos

• RJ and Friends and The Members Band at RJ Cocktail Bar

• Margarita and Tennant at Manila Pavilion Boulevard Lounge

• 9th Avenue and Michaelangelo at Tavern on the Square, Greenhills 3

• Gladys Guevarra at Rainbo Malate

Feb. 18

• Erik Santos at Casino Angeles with Freeverse Dy

• Wingspan and Freeway at Subsribia

• Abradoabra at RJ Cocktail

• Jaydee Hooper and Bret Hayes at Manila Pavilion Boulevard Lounge

• Opod and Omnium at Tavern on the Square, Greenhills 3

• The Manila Philharmonic Orchestra at Shangrila Edsa; 4 p.m.

• Kitay and Rank at Rainbo Malate

• Randy Santiago at Rainbo Roman Mercato

Feb. 20

• OJ Martinez and Charles Rosales at Subsribia

• 9th Avenue at Virgin Café

• Suzy Unos at Manila Pavilion Boulevard Lounge

• Groovework at Tavern on the Square, Greenhills 3

Feb. 21

• Ms. Cod and Company at RJ Cocktail Bar

• BK Tijam at Subsribia

My three favorite show biz couples still going strong

SUNSHINE Cruz and Cesar Montano

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I MUST SAY IT'S DONE THAT JUST sometimes that Valentine's Day falls on the same day that this column is scheduled to come out. Cupid is going the hopeless romantic in me (or is it hopeless much the pocket silly) to write about sweet Aww-d this day of hearts is more of a Day of Hunks for me this year. I am opting for clear-ism clarity.

To put me in the mood, I thought of my three favorite show biz couples—Albert and Lizzi Martinez, Lizzy Montano and Sunshine Cruz, Julius and Tin-Tin Babao. I asked them the secret behind the most unforgettable thing their faithful did for them, plus their V-Day message.

But before we go into that, allow me to salute The Showtimers, Showtime and Robson for keeping their love affair in turbulent show biz waters. Most celebrity couples ruin this thing called love, which is supposed to be treasured, into something unsweet? What with all the temptations that comes with the territory? Throw in the pressure of keeping their private lives private from the paparazzi and you have a recipe for disaster.

I am sure that happy to have played a part in Albert and Lizzi's unbelievable love story. Before Albert threw the limited financial hope with Lizzi, he told me about their dream. When they disappeared, it broke The News Girl.s Amalia Fuentes—Lizzi's mom!—asked for me to come home, to investigate on the wanted for hours. I went home only when I knew she was gone. By way of recovery is no words for Albert and Lizzi's marriage vows. They confessed the unspeakable during their struggling years in the US. I was moved to tears as one of their brides-maids because I know how they fought for their love. Albert and Lizzi wanted to that there are rewards for staying when the going thing is impossible to leave.

I love how Robby and Shine is unguarded moments. I recently spent time with them to chow Robby was host. She his mulle "treated" him. I remember when Robby and I were judges in Mr. Imahara (Robby) Pageant. Shine wasn't able to watch the pageant; she kept backgoing. Robby, asking if the candidates were cuter than she was, since she was pregnant at the time. Robby played along and told her he still he one of the girls. They taunted each other mercilessly and we all had a good laugh watching them act like high school kids. Robby and Shine touch as close as it can get a normal business, couples should not forget to have this.

It was a delight to be in "Magandang Umaga Bayan" ("MUB" now) with Julius and Tin. Even it my "Evil. Inswad" mode to how segment then was taped and times went on low, I often got to bond with the couple in the dressing room. There's usually no separation rule that co-workers should not fall be with other. Julius and Tin showed us that love makes you defy all the rules. It's more huggable to break rules than to break hearts. The Babaos are role models for all friends who have to pursue but for two cautious to make the move. They were tells us that the friendship doesn't have to end just because we let love take over.

May the anecdotes below make your heart smile. Assuring that even if love doesn't work for you, right now, at least it does for others. There's always enough love to go around, we just all have to wait for our turn. Love is patient, but please hurry thatalot!

Lizzi Martinez

Albert has done so many unbelievable things for me throughout our 14 years of marriage. But what meant the most to me is when he turned his back on everything and gave up his career for me—my career, when it was at its peak, just so I could be a life with me from the bottom, with all the uncertainties. He didn't mind, as long as we were together. We had no doubt in the US, we did everything on our own. He worked as a janitor boy and was paid $7.20 per hour. He persevered, just so he could provide for us and our then unborn child Alyssa. He also revealed to a baker even if he was allergic to flour because of his asthma. Once he had a severe attack at work and almost died! He could have had a life of luxury as an actor in the Philippines but he chose to be with us.

Albert, thank you for being my husband, my lover and best friend. Here's to another 25 years of more days and beyond!

Sunshine Cruz

I'll never forget when Robby first brought me to Bohol. He set a romantic dinner for two in the middle of nowhere and had the Loboc choir serenade me. That's when he asked me to be his wife.

Robby, Whenever winds we go through—And there long my door pushing pushier sing family rather—I assure you that I won't allow anybody or anything to take us. Yes, we are life. Thanks for all the patience and understanding!"

Tin-Tin Babao

What stands out in my memory is when Julius proposed to me on national TV on Sharon Cuneta's show. I can never get over that! Recently, at our mass, we were walking along the aisle and he suddenly looked at me and said, "If many was a million times over, I'll marry you a million times over."I melted!

Julius, When all else is taken away from me, I will find comfort in the thought that I have you to love. I may not have all the things I dream of in life but in the end of the day I have you because I have you!"

SERGIOSAL: TO T.L., thanks for you-know-what...

(E-mail ... www.mgkalaw.ph; tl@yhoo.com)

JULIUS Babao and Tin-Tin Borrido-Babao

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BUSINESS

Treasury bill rates ease across the board

Demand boosted by improved credit outlook

By Michelle F. Remo

TREASURY BILL RATES DECLINED ACROSS THE BOARD yesterday as market sentiment on the government's fiscal condition was lifted by the improved credit outlook given by Standard & Poor's and FitchRatings.

The bellwether 91-day treasury bill yield dropped a basis point to 5.007 percent as volume of bids eased higher than the government's P1 billion offering at P2.042 billion. The Bureau of the Treasury's auction committee accepted P1 billion worth of bids.

"The appetite (for government securities) is very good. This is influenced by the announcement of an improved outlook by credit rating agencies," said Assistant Treasurer Omar Cruz in a press briefing after yesterday's T-bill auction.

The 182-day bills fetched 6.166 percent, or 3.3 basis points lower than the previous week's. The six-month bills were more than six times oversubscribed with volume of bids reaching P7.24 billion compared with the P1-billion offering.

The Treasury decided to auction P1.1bn worth of bills, or P400 million higher than the programmed debt offering due to the strong demand for the 182-day paper.

The rate for the 364-day bills reached 7.24 percent, declining by 7.9 basis points from the previous week's. Bids for the one-year securities stood at P5.46 bil.

TREASURY 1a

YUCHENGCO

Yuchengco retires; daughter Helen is successor

TAIPAN ALFONSO T. YUCHENGCO IS retiring as chair of the Yuchengco Group of Companies and is relinquishing all other posts he holds in the group this month.

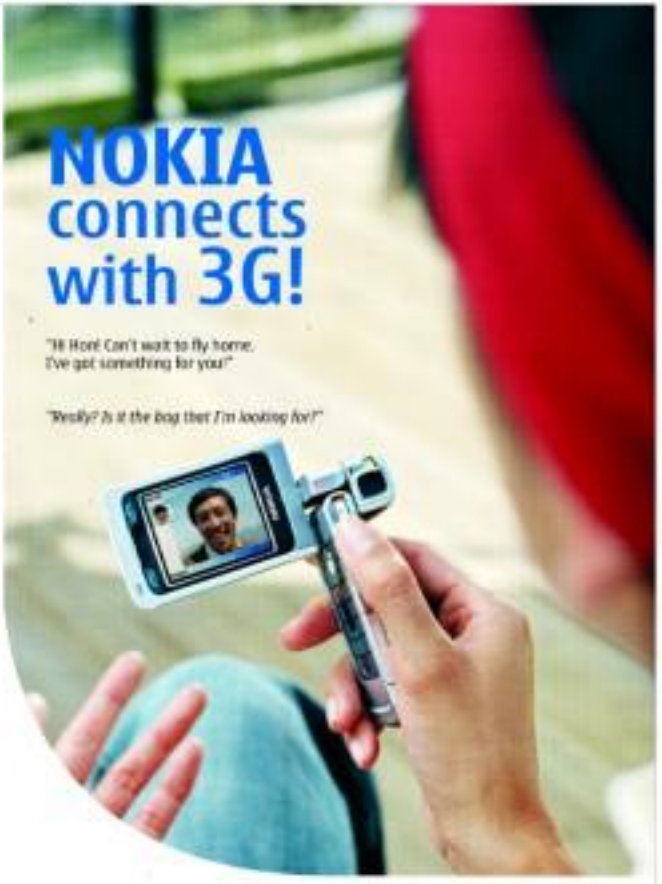
A successful diplomat-businessman and philanthropist, Yuchengco said he was leaving the reins over FGU to his eldest daughter Helen Y. Dee.

The 83-year-old Yuchengco, or "Al" as he is known in business circles, is acknowledged as one of the Philippines' most successful tycoons, having propelled the growth of YGC from its humble operation as a small insurance firm, China Insurance and Surety Co. Inc. (now Malayan Insurance Co. Inc.) along Gaisano Street in Binondo, Cebu that it is now—one of the country's biggest business conglomerates.

To date, YGC has more than 40 member-firms, each a major industry player. It has Pan Pacific Pagibig companies' Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC), Malayan Group of Insurance Companies, Great Pacific Life Assurance Corp., Philippine and Global Investments Inc. (GIL). It has also ventured into providing university education through Mapua Institute of Technology and construction and engineering services through EEI Corp.

Yuchengco was instrumental in setting SEDC from a private development bank in 1960 into one of the country's largest universal banks today with consolidated assets totalling nearly P200 billion. He has also established a formidable presence in the insurance

INSURANCE 1b4



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No more IPO auctions please

YOUNG BOOMCHIEF INLEN PEREZ has also seen little wrinkling anniversary. I decided that was a good day to get married because I would only have to take one with one name a year instead of twice. Also, all the anniversary restaurants are fully booked so are romantically easy to a date. Tim you two are going to the Disney Space, all you cannot be FIL.

We got married to a registry office, after which we were linked to via a new where a middle aged lady gave us a book called "Family planning in the 90s." It was 1996). I told her that when I reached 40 I would not need any family planning. She was not amused.

I usually answer e-mails, but was shocked yesterday to receive an e-mail from my friend Ian Gow whom I have known since 1982 sometime and is very depressed. Is there a limit to such people?

His situation and mine are IPOd.

"I buy Mr. Bearbull, is it safe to have a baby after 35?" Well, I am not a doctor but I would have thought that after having 35, you should quit.

I have an umbrella in my office, and I call it Adam because one of his ribs is missing.

What is the difference between a Xicon machine and bird flu? One makes facemasks; the other makes sick families.

A one-week up-after-an-operation and nibble surgeon, "I can't feel my legs." The surgeon replied, "That is because we have cut off your arms."

I realize that my articles are much longer than other columnists, so the first two parts of "How to be a better investor Part II" were splattered over two pages while the third was relegated to the back page. I mentioned 43 e-mails from readers asking what happened to the last part, so they did not see it as the inside page. I sent it to all of them with an apology, but it is not the editor's fault. Advertisements take priority because they are ours producing. In the future, I will reduce my articles by one-third, and if necessary by one-half.

The series, which I update and revise annually, attracted a lot of attention, and I received up to 30 e-mails a day from readers. I answered them all briefly, as I only type with one finger. It is a pity there is no course on the stock market, but the PSE had a seminar last week to get the interest of investors and I hope they will continue to do this.

While writing this series, I unexpectedly ignored the rest of the market, but if First Gen had looked attractive, I would have mentioned it. Even the underwriters shied off the top half of the range from PS1-P74-8 cents to P12 - P82. It was obvious that the "enormous amount of foreign interest" did not exist. So I told readers in my newsletter to forget about the issue altogether.

I was shocked when the underwriters announced a further reduction in the price to P67 because they receive no underwriting commission which runs into millions of dollars in exchange for which they guarantee to take up any unsubscribed shares at the minimum price of P82. I have never heard of underwriters reneging on their commitment before, but they must have put pressure of PS1 to agree.

The share seems to an extraordinary discount, closing PS1 down at P45.50. This is the 4th IPO to go to a discount, though ICC went initially to a large premium, and fell only when the company announced it would raise its profits forecast. I think investors are now wise to this type of auction and rightly so.

When the Conservatives government denationalized the steel industry there were a number of new issues, all at a fixed price, and every one went to a premium and stayed above the issue price for the next two years. I wrote about this a couple of months ago. After a long period of successful, heavily oversubscribed new issues and happy investors, the issuing houses switched to a Dutch auction. It crept was fixed and you could put in multiple bids. For example, if the range was 0.6 pounds, you could apply for 10,000 shares at 5; 50,000 at 5.08 and 100,000 at 5. The issuing house would start at the top and work their way down until the issue was fully subscribed.

If it was, then you all point was reached at say 5.40, and anyone who bid above that price was allotted shares at 5.40 even if they bid 6. Anyone below was cut out. Also, the system did see weak and nobody bothered to apply. If speculators could not see a profit on the first day, they ignored it. After the auctions flopped three times in a row, it was eventually abandoned. I hope the PSE, in the future, will discourage this type of issue. Maybe it would in the UK, but we are very much small-

MR. BEARBULL
Bear Necessities

or and less sophisticated. Let us return to fixed price issues.

The dividend season starts to ramp this week, and already we have a 34-percent increase from BLC, a 52% increase from MER and a 33-percent increase from MWC. Most companies are expected to post higher profits for last year yet the market remains listless. mrbearbull@hotmail.com

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SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

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MORE EFFICIENT

MWC profit up 51%

By Christine A. Gaplcao

MANILA WATER CO. reported a 51 percent increase in its net income last year to P2.06 billion from year-ago level.

Company officials said the improvement could be attributed to better operational efficiency and service improvements.

In an investors briefing, MWC president Antonino T. Aquino said the company's financial performance was backed by strong operational gains and an 8-percent reduction in systems losses, also known as non-revenue water.

According to Aquino, the company is set to provide water to additional 43,167 households and to improve service to existing 5 million customers," Aquino said.

The MWC collection counted to additional billed volume of 29 million liters per day (MLD) serving up MWCI's water delivery to 656 MLD as of December 2005, Aquino said. MWCI now serves more than 800,000 households, 95 percent of which are now enjoying 24-hour water service.

According to MWCI chief finance officer Sharon Neosa, company revenue grew by 23 percent to P5.68 billion. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Ebitda) went up by 46 percent to P2.95 billion, reflecting strong operating cash flows, Neosa added.

MWCI intends to sustain its growth momentum in 2006 and has earmarked a P1.6 billion capital investment program that is aimed at reaching consumers in high-level areas such as Taguig, Angono, Binangonan, Cainta, San Mateo, Montalban, Antipolo, Pasig-Marikina, Rizal and Lake Palo.

Yuchengco retires; daughter Helen is successor

From page B1

business for over 75 years, making sure the names Malayan Insurance, the undisputed leader in the industry today.

Yuchengco said that despite his retirement, he will keep his office at MDC Plaza to stay up close to major developments in YGC and in the country's affairs.

A certified public accountant and ours as accounting professor, Yuchengco has retained the majority of his employees and business partners for his fundamentals and attention to detail, knowing very well how "small things can consider good plans."

On top of his numerous achievements in business, he is one of the few who has had a distinguished career in government service. He has served in various roles in China and to Japan and in the Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He has also been a trusted adviser to several Filipino presidents. He currently serves as presidential adviser for Foreign Affairs with a Cabinet rank under the Arroyo administration.

WESTERN VISAYAS MEDICAL CENTER
Mandurriao, Iloilo City
Tel. No. 335-17-07
E-mail address: wvmc@mozcom.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Name of Project: Bidding of Hospital Supplies and Materials
Location: Western Visayas Medical Center

Brief Description

Description	Unit Price	ABC Total Price
Procurement of Hospital Supplies and Materials		Php 10,000,100.00

Approved Budget for the Contract: Php 10,000,100.00
Contract Duration: One (1) year
Delivery Period: Within 15 days after acceptance of Purchase Order

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years and must submit a valid PCAB License and Valid Mayor's Permit. The Eligibility Check is open to all. Bidding is open to all, whether local or foreign, subject to the conditions of Republic Act 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below during office hours from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders starting February 15, 2006 from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of Ten Thousand Pesos (Php 10,000.00).

It may also be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS), provided that bidders shall pay the non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents not later than the submission of their bids.

The Western Visayas Medical Center reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For further information, please refer to:
Atty. Ma. Cristina Gonzaga-Iso
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
Western Visayas Medical Center
Mandurriao, Iloilo City
Tel. No. 335-17-07
E-mail address: wvmc@mozcom.com

Date of Publication: February 14, 2006

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
CLARK, PAMPANGA

February 14, 2006

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (PELCO II) WITH OFFICE ADDRESS AT SAN ROQUE, CLARK, PAMPANGA IS PRESENTLY IN NEED OF INTERESTED ELIGIBLE BIDDERS FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF: ONE (1) BRAND NEW, FACTORY FOUR (4) UNITS SUZUKI VITARA 4X4 MT DHS AND FOUR (4) UNITS SUZUKI VEHICLE (4 WHEEL DRIVE).

You are therefore invited to submit your bid/proposal to the PBAC and participate in a sealed bidding on February 15, 2006 (Thursday), 10:00 A.M. at PELCO II Conference Room, Clark, Pampanga. Pampanga whereby your bid will be opened in your presence in that of your representatives. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.

REQUEST FURTHER TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SEALED BIDS/PROPOSALS ABOVE FROM THE BID AMOUNT, THE TERMS OF PAYMENT. THE BID BOND IS EITHER IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TWO AND ONE HALF PERCENT (2.5%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OR SURETY BOND (IN C.R.) EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE ALL BIDDERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE AT PELCO II ANNEX/CITY ROOM AT 10:00AM, DECISIVENESS AND PERFECT CLARIFICATION PLEASE CONTACT (IN POST PAID) COMMITTEE NO. 045-624-0411 (10 MR. MES. 5 EP 045) 801-0904-40.

LATE SUBMISSION OF BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. THE PBAC HAS THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, WAIVE ANY INFORMALITY IN THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) ANG LEA N. MARIANO
PBAC Chairperson

PBAC - February 14 & 15, 2006

NOTICE OF SEARCH FOR
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BOARD OF TRUSTEES & PRESIDENT

PRESIDENCY

Minimum Personal Qualifications:

1. Natural Born Filipino Citizen;
2. Holder of a Master's Degree;
3. Must have at least ten (10) years of experience in the management of a large organization, preferably in the academe;
4. Must have a distinguished record of professional achievement and scholarship in the field of education;
5. Must have a proven record of leadership, integrity, probity and dynamism;
6. Must be physically and mentally fit to perform the duties of the position;
7. Must not have been convicted by final judgment of any crime involving moral turpitude;
8. Must not be related within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity to any member of the Board of Trustees or to the President of the University;
9. Must not be engaged directly or indirectly in any business, profession or occupation that may conflict with his duties as President of the University;
10. Must not have been dismissed from any public or private office for cause;
11. Must not be a candidate for any elective position in the government.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the University;
2. Shall exercise supervision over all the colleges, offices and personnel of the University;
3. Shall implement the policies, rules and regulations of the Board of Trustees;
4. Shall recommend to the Board of Trustees the creation, consolidation or abolition of colleges, offices and positions;
5. Shall submit to the Board of Trustees the annual budget of the University;
6. Shall perform such other duties and responsibilities as may be assigned by the Board of Trustees.

Compensation and Benefits:

Commensurate with the position and in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University.

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Chairman, Board of Trustees

Atty. Ma. Cristina Gonzaga-Iso
Chairman, Committee on Search

Atty. Virgilio Garcia
Vice Chairman, Committee on Search

Dr. Marilou Nera Cuadra-Hernandez
Vice Chairman, Committee on Search

Applications should be submitted to the Office of the Commissioner, Room 5, Rizal Memorial Building, Manila not later than March 15, 2006.

Supervisory Leadership Development

February 16, 2006, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (Holiday Inn Galleria)

The production or sales performance of your people and your business depends largely on your supervisors. If they can effectively guide, control and motivate the people, the desired result will be achieved. Unfortunately, supervision is anything but easy. In fact, most often what happens is that when a person/worker is promoted to a supervisory position, the company loses an effective worker and gains a poor supervisor. This is known as the Peter Principle and this is largely attributable to lack of fundamental skills and attitude training in supervision. Lack of training is a main factor towards the failure. This powerful program is designed to equip and empower the Supervisor by providing them the fundamental and advanced concepts and tools in professionalizing their management style and enable them to effectively lead their team.

LEARNING GOALS

Session I - Who Owns Supervision Fail
Session II - Becoming a Supervisor
Session III - Team Work and Roles of Supervisor
Session IV - Planning and Goal Setting
Session V - Leading Your People
Session VI - How to Motivate the Board

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

* New or recently promoted supervisors with less than three years of formal supervisory experience
* Experienced supervisors who have not had formal training in supervision and management
* Internal resource persons who have an unofficial supervisory role of leading teams of workers or volunteers
* Individuals whose career plans include becoming a supervisor in the near future

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NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

INVITATION TO BID

The National Development Company (NDC) is inviting interested bidders for the sale of its property with a total area of 5,171 square meters, more or less, covered by Transfer Certificate of Title (TCT) No. 5-2-1 (T-1) situated at Barangay Bulacan, Bulacan, Bulacan.

Interested parties may register and secure bidding documents and copy of terms and conditions of sale at the address below upon payment of a non-refundable registration fee of P500.00.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY
c/o Ma. Remedios C. Dizon
Disposal Committee
11th Floor, National Development Company Bldg.
Nos. 130 Amorsolo cor. Herrera Sts., Legaspi Village, Makati City
Telefax: (02) 840-3000 loc. 3001/3002
Direct Line: (02) 892-0000 loc. 3001/3002

Sealed bids/offers shall be received on or before March 15, 2006, at the Disposal Committee's address above.

The Disposal Committee reserves the right to reject any and all bids or to waive any of the conditions of sale in the best interest of the government.

Disposal Committee

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
CLARK, PAMPANGA

February 14, 2006

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (PELCO II) WITH OFFICE ADDRESS AT SAN ROQUE, CLARK, PAMPANGA IS INVITING FOLLOWING INTERESTED BIDDERS FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF THE FOLLOWING:

Package I:

1	Conductor, ACSR Dog	—	50,000 Meters
2	Conductor, ACSR Rabbit	—	50,000 Meters
3	Conductor, Protective # 10	—	10,000 Meters

Package II:

1	Pole, Concrete 40 Class 10	—	50 Pieces
2	Pole, Concrete 40 Class 7	—	50 Pieces
3	Pole, Concrete 40 Class 5	—	50 Pieces

Package III:

1	Transformer, Dist. 25 KVA	(PRIMARY) 13.8 KVA	— 10 Units
2	Transformer, Dist. 37.5 KVA	(PRIMARY) 13.8 KVA	— 10 Units
3	Transformer, Dist. 50 KVA	(PRIMARY) 13.8 KVA	— 10 Units

You are therefore invited to submit your bid/proposals to the PBAC and participate in a sealed bidding on February 15, 2006 (Thursday), 11:00 A.M. at PELCO II Conference Room, Clark, Pampanga. Pampanga whereby your bid will be opened in your presence or that of your representatives. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.

REQUEST FURTHER TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SEALED BIDS/PROPOSALS ABOVE FROM THE BID AMOUNT, THE TERMS OF PAYMENT. THE BID BOND IS EITHER IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TWO AND ONE HALF PERCENT (2.5%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OR SURETY BOND (IN C.R.) EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE. ALL BIDDERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE AT PELCO II ANNEX/CITY ROOM AT 10:00AM, DECISIVENESS AND PERFECT CLARIFICATION PLEASE CONTACT (IN POST PAID) COMMITTEE NO. 045-624-0411 (10 MR. MES. 5 EP 045) 801-0904-40.

PLEASE BE INFORMED TO SUBMIT THREE (3) SEPARATE RESPONSIVE & BY CORRESPONDING BID BONDS FOR PACKAGE I, PACKAGE II & PACKAGE III RESPECTIVELY.

LATE SUBMISSION OF BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. THE PBAC HAS THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, WAIVE ANY INFORMALITY IN THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) ANG LEA N. MARIANO
PBAC Chairperson

PBAC - February 14 & 15, 2006

HEALTHY heart tests /C3

LIFESTYLE

Like Chris Rand-Forrest

Love in the time of E-VAT

By Anne A. Jambora

AS SOON AS HER DAILY GRIND is over, Angela Simeon (not her real name) lets her hair down in the hippest night spots of the city or in some quiet, yet undiscovered nook. It's fast talk, as always, at her bestfriend of two years, Augusto, whose idea of going out together almost every day was the spring of their adventures together in the city and beyond.

Lucky for these fun-seekers, they can afford to combine those many bonuses (P2,000-2,000 each every time they go out—and they make sure daring to go regular as almost every day. That's not even counting the out-of-town trips that easily topples each to fork at P4,000 or more.

But with the E-VAT now at a steep 12 percent, the couple knew their lavish routine drastic lifestyle makeover.

Movie-going is among the first to go on their "reform" list. Instead of indulging themselves in their free cinemas where tickets have jacked up from P120 to P180, both now go to a neighboring mall that charges only P110. Angela says they might even try the older movie houses of the same mall where tickets are as an affordable P90.

Cheap food

Their dining experience has also taken an unbelievable turn-for-the-worse. Money and tradition

The 2-percent increase in the expanded value-added tax means more incentive for value-added dating

at cooking has taken over pork and pricey dishes. Both have found out they can each spend as little as P500-P 200 per sitting—homemeal or decent eating places. And there are not the bland-but-bad banquets either, where despite mediocrity—family as "extraordinary price-tickets." If They're under-occupied, they opt to cook at Angela's place, Luxurious cuisine, she says, are now reserved for special occasions.

"It is a conscious effort to look for cheaper alternatives now that we drive up all the way to Binondo in search of good food places," she says.

Even their car pools routine has changed. It, for instance, a parking space is now so cheaper, it remained for the first, so, that hosts chip charges per hour thereafter. Augusto will take the car out for a spin just before the hour or the space expires, then allows it to look again on the pink. That way, Angela says, they won't have to pay the succeeding per hour rate.

And it used to be that Augusto had the penchant of pumping in premium gasoline into the car that traveling from his house in Pandacan to join up Angela in Manila cost him at least P200. Today he has lowered his octane for cheaper substitutes.

Both also spend economical activities together, such as playing to an 18-hole mini golf range with no taking place of only P150 head, with the P300 refundable upon checking out. Although golf is not exactly their cup of tea, the save they get to spend spread for hours together for a very minimal price. The same goes for badminton, their favorite sport, that allows them to play until they can run of breath for only P130.

Recently, the couple has learned another enjoyable trip—strolling leisurely on Roxas Boulevard in the city that are absolutely free. Not only will the scenic view throw a wonderful dose relaxing lazy walks together, but they get to learn history along the way, too.

It is Angela's New Year's resolution not to drain her paycheck. So far, she says, she's doing a good job of it. Times are hard, she says, but technology need not mean one thing apart by of life. After all, the old adage still holds true: The best things in life are free.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph

What the heart needs

LOVE—YOU FOR HEART, THAT IS—SHOULD be known.

Studies show that heart disease is no longer just a problem of the elderly. Many young Filipinos are increasingly at risk of heart attack.

Dr. Antonio Sibulo Jr., director of the Heart Institute of the St. Luke's Medical Center, says living and eating habits have to change to prevent heart disasters.

Though the elderly (60 years old and above) are generally at greater risk due to the stiffening of blood vessels, Sibulo says he is now getting cases in their 30s.

Four major factors that may lead to heart disease are high cholesterol, smoking, hypertension and diabetes. Contributing factors are sedentary living, lack of exercise, obesity, stress and genders.

Sibulo says the westernization of the Filipino diet—fatty foods and lots of meats—has led to higher cholesterol levels.

Hypertension or high blood pressure is now a problem with some 20 percent of the Philippine population.

A smoker is 13 times more likely to develop heart ailment than a nonsmoker.

Sibulo, who set up the St. Luke's Cardiac Rehabilitation Department (ref. 7208161) in 1989, says even people with heart disease problems should do regular 30-40 minutes workout three times a week with moderate intensity.

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ANGEL'S sweet escape. gorgeous Christa Diaz, with her prince charming, businessman Carlitos Arrocha Morales

HAPPY together: Scott Bannon and his attractive wife Bea Zaldivar in love while starting for the same firm in San Francisco.

BROTHER and sister love. International businessman, stocks backer Ricky Delgado, and his gorgeous sister Carmen Delgado

CUPID hit the bull's-eye. Still in each other's arms four years later, the beautiful twosome of Johnny Velasquez and Margi Pascual

ONE of my dearest friends, glam girl Vicky F. Calvo's, who will forever be my soulmate

AFTER SIX years, international businessman Marvin Crespo professed true love for the "it" girl of 2005, Celina Lopez.

FAITHFUL! Just as in love! Stunning beauty Amanda T. with her dad, mega entrepreneur Al Tengco

TRUE LOVE: Beautiful Lizzie Ester gives her husband, dashing Jaime Augusto Zobel, a big hug and a kiss.

SO IN LOVE. Beautiful young couple Victor Stallion and Stephanie Zobel de la Cruz at first sight and will exchange vows this July.

ALLEGIANT popular Joel Tan Lucas and tall, eye-catching beauty Lisa Kessler are still an item after two years.

DEFINITELY the wedding of the year, held in Tagaytay with 1,000 guests from Cosmo Manille's side as well

SOME 21,000 invitees witnessed the star-studded tribal wedding of Bea Audrey Tan and Beto Miguel Zobel.

Lovers and other strangers

ANGELIQUE Villareal still good-bye to her old love after meeting Chat Cuerva.

AWARD WINNING underwater photographer Quirijn Tuinen and top equestrienne Becca Ouwehand are back to each other's arms.

TRUE companionship. My paboggie, Beach Cliff Ben Chan, and talented actress and writer Miguel Pastrana, are blessed with intimate bonding.

PREVIOUSLY A CROSSED companion, an intimate photo that turns into a lasting memory, a feathery hug, laughter . . . and home.

Yes, paboggies, love may be defined in countless ways.

For the true romantic, this day is most anticipated. But for the cynic and heartbroken, it's just another day.

I'm about to throw him Cupid, that little rascal, may or may not mold our individual destinies in the avenue of love.

Let's start with this love affair of award-winning underwater photographer Quirijn Tuinen with equestrienne Becca Ouwehand that lasted several years. Every gorgeous model Amanda Griffin, who ended her short-lived love affair with handsome Paolo Severin.

Corny I broke up with Becca's ex to hook up with Amanda. The romances turned only a short while, as incompatibility stank them all t quite.

But here, paboggies, works in a funny way. Corny T. realized that Becca was the girl for him after all so, as of this writing, they are "on again."

My favorite gal for all seasons, talented designer and extremely intelligent writer Celine Lopez had her ups and downs in romances. Then came along interior-

TRUE companionship. My paboggie, Beach Cliff Ben Chan, and talented actress and writer Miguel Pastrana, are blessed with intimate bonding

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcacha

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare

tional entrepreneur and eligible bachelor Marvin Crespo, who had his own share of disappointments. They now find themselves in each other's arms.

"For six years I loved Celine from a distance. Although we moved in the same circle, I never ran with my BB till I made my feelings known," Marvin told me.

"I love the process. I'm in the state I was building her but did not realize it till we started dating," Celine explained, the look of happiness in her eyes. They are now one of the happiest customers in our town, paboggies.

In love again

Another beautiful story is that of a gorgeous woman. For several years, she thought she was happily married but things began to turn sour and rarely she decides to leave home and start a new life.

Meanwhile, this low-profile, dashing gentleman is also on the same boat. His "marriage was history with bottom, as he decides to be honest and end his marriage."

Both have the perennial, classy and dis-dis backgrounds. The lady and the gentleman meet, and know instantly they were meant for each other. Today this second-time-around lovers are extremely happy, despite the envy and intrigues that plague them. Godsings, against all odds they survived and still survive.

This business magnate from the north was happily married for years to a beautiful woman with a well-known family name. After a son and a daughter, the couple separated. Soon, after several years of being apart, the ex-husband is ready to go back to his beautiful ex-wife. But she is not ready to be "a wayback-home with again."

"My kids are old enough now to understand what are both did, so why should I go back to them? We are the greatest of friends, and it's better this way, at least for now," the wife told our table a teasing laugh.

Read more funny lines Mercantile, who separated from her husband, are photographer Patrick Bermejo-Guerrero, stars, lots more. Will love smile my way or have Cupid's bow, who was at separated from his wife may be-him he-see I'm it.

Then we have the sugar baron, Miss Carlos "Badgee" Lopez Pedia, who fell madly in love with his schoolmate, then 14-year-young vivacious Imelda Ophthemia. Not long after Sarah's schooling abroad, Judgee declared his undying love for her. They tied the knot in a chapel in the middle of his sugarcane field in the south, paboggies.

KARGUE'S top bosses Sarah Opulencia P. and sugar baron/judgee Lopez Pedia, who fell in love in high school, celebrated their 33rd anniversary by renewing their vows.

Just twelve ago, the couple renewed their beautiful marriage vows, celebrating 25 silvery years of love and happiness in Iloilo.

Marriage isn't passé

Last year, two renowned couples, who still believed in marriage, gave up their independence and nowhere single life to vow "till death do us part."

One of our town's most-eligible bachelors, JMJ's our president and CEO Paolo Puzon, tied his "I do" in Alta Rosario, the now PDP's executive Lifestyle consultant/writing scribes, in a romantic church wedding in cool Tagaytay.

Next, tall, good-looking southern gentleman Carlos Balsells sent breast-cancer specialist Dr. Rosie Cua-Tiney Bien-Aime's heart to San Francisco and became husband and wife in a gorgeous wedding at a private chapel in the groom's mansion in the middle of a sugarcane field in Talisay, Negros.

Three more: the wedding of one of Cosmo Manille's sugar boon child couples upon six years of togetherness—chop-chop! handsome Paulo Lobregat and sultry talented designer Katrina "Kat" Tantoco—at the fun, Ilonn Country Club.

Good and bad news

Nonetheless, there is always bad news and good news.

Let's start with the bad news. While their pals thought it was going to be it for extremely intelligent beauty Jeannine de Leon and elusive Portuguese bachelor demonio Ramon of SGB, one of the parties involved decided to end the relationship because he/she was not ready for marriage.

Now, the broken heart has healed. Jeannine and Antonio are in the restaurant business together in Boracay, as the best of friends, with their partner, Miss Roberts. Now that's living in a tribal.

The end-of-the-year shocker for Cosmo Manille's elite-minded was the breakup of the marriage of society beauty and woman of shadows style Maryanne Ojeda and entrepreneur Francis Lamera, the MM grandson, after 11 years as a perfect couple.

Francis L. fell for a younger woman he met through an uncle. The woman is hoping to be a singer, so the French would say, c'est dommage. Lavoy, what a pity.

The new one of the most eligible debutantes of the old world's society at the time. He was a dashing basketball hero who moves his homage to southern sugar barons.

A celebrated courtship led to a marriage that has lasted for 30 golden years. Now business magnate Peping Hechanova and Molly Concepcion are aiming for platinum, dahlings.

And, finally, I would definitely say, dahlings, that the wedding of the year was that of handsome Rep. Jack Duavit and gorgeous Audrey Yu, after two years of togetherness.

CUPID is crying. Woman of style Maryann Ojeda and entrepreneur Francis Lamera have gone their separate ways.

NOTHING can stop this hot romance—gorgeous Oriana Cadenza and the "it" boy of 2004, Sergi Hanonen.

BUSINESS magnate Peping Hechanova and socialite Molly Concepcion are going for the platinum.

BODIES beautiful. It's still hot love after two sizzling years for Valerie delos Santos and Bobby Manangsan.

IT'S all over for "Punch" gal, vivacious Chinggay Arcinas, and architect Victor Consunji.

BUSTLING Alaska Campos will marry BPO associate director Vincent Abaycon in October

My last on awesome tribal wedding witnessed by publicity-ology of Mendanas and 10,000 guests belonging to his constituency, a grand wedding followed in Tagaytay and the reception was held at the beautifully renovated Bad Vista Lodge. Over a thousand high-ranking government officials headed by no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo and Cosmopolitan Manille's elite crowded around.

My mother was an extremely beautiful woman. My dad, although totally in love with her, had the roving eye of an eagle, which sent my mother into jealous fits. One day, my father wrote a poem for her that completely changed his attitude toward him for the better.

So always remember "love may die if held too tightly, love may fly if held too tightly. How do I know whether I'm killing you or loving you go?"

In the midst of this confusion, my dearest paboggies, simply live life and let love live. After all, love conquers us...so go take that leap 'til next!

INSIDE OUT
Gory Quirino

THE COLUMNS Inside Out by Cory Quirino and Inner Awareness by Jaime Licauco will appear next week. ED

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime I. Licauco

Do-it-yourself cardiovascular tests

WELL AND GOOD

Erma Inumi

HOLISTIC HEALTH EXPERT Marianela Hicks believes that the world's best doctor and healer is you. Without fanfare and Melanie Oz unveils a super move.

In their bestseller, "You: The Owner's Manual," the medical duotsas give readers easy-to-understand explanations about how the human body functions and what you can do to maintain good health and prevent disease.

If you want simple no-nonsense health information written with a touch of humor, this is the book for you. Hicks and Oz also have practical do-it-yourself tests for many aspects of health, like gallstones, sleep apnea, memory and food allergies.

The tests should not keep you from seeking medical attention but may open your eyes to the need to see a doctor. Here are three tests from the book to determine the health of your heart, lungs and blood vessels.

Stairway to heaven

The stairs in your home or office can tell you a lot about your heart and lungs, according to Hicks and Oz. The test is simple: Briskly run up two flights of stairs or walk six blocks. If you can do so without stopping to rest or without gasping for air, your lungs are most likely in okay shape.

Then claim the test can determine if someone is fit for surgery. "For those who pass the test, it indicates a decrease in your risk of dying or being disabled in surgery to that of someone who is about 10 years younger. It indicates your lung's ability to provide oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide."

They recommend that people do the test every month to check lung function and overall fitness level. "One of the major warning signs of decreased lung function is seeing a severe change in your ability to complete the test—from being able to walk the flights easily to suddenly having a lot of trouble with it.

"The reason? When you exercise over this compact period of time, shortness of breath means all your organs are feeling deprived of oxygen, and that some of them might not be getting enough."

South of the border

Men have a built-in system to find out if their arteries are healthy or not. All they have to do is look below their belt. Scientists and Oz claim that the penis is a man's lipstick. "It can tell how everything is functioning throughout the rest of a man's body.

"Without proper blood flow...meaning that arteries do not dilate appropriately because they are inflamed or clogged...men can't get an erection because they can't get blood in or keep it there.

"The chemical mechanisms that work to get blood in and out of the penis are the same ones that help blood flow in and from the brain, heart and kidneys. So master the location of veins and arteries in your body, it's the same process."

Mirror, mirror

Brown and Oz say one of the first signs of arterial aging can be seen in your eyes or lobes. Diagonal creases in your lobes is a warning sign. They claim to see yellowish plaques, or cholesterol deposits around your eyelids, which are called xanthelasmas.

Declining hormone levels can also be seen in the mirror. They write, "If a man notices that he need to shave every day but now has to shave less often, it's a sign that testosterone is not stimulating a great deal of beard growth, which is a sign of low testosterone levels."

Note: The Association of Women Professionals of the Philippines will hold a Fitness and Management Symposium-Workshop on Feb. 25. The American Heart and Stroke Association will hold a Heart Health Walk-Fitness Workshop on Feb. 26. For all events, call 899-7762 and 897-5100/2882, or log on to www.fitnessphilippines.org.

Hot exercise questions.ms

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

45-degree scissors

STRENGTHENS ABDOMINAL MUSCLES

Equipment:
Exercise mat
Exercise technique:

1. Lie down on the exercise mat with your arms extended beside you.
2. Bring your knees directly above your hips. Extend both legs straight up.
3. Tighten abdominal muscles as you slowly lower your legs to a 45-degree angle. This is your starting position.
4. Continue to maintain the tightness in your abdominal muscles as you slowly lower one leg toward the floor.
5. Bring your leg back to the starting position and repeat with the opposite leg. This is one repetition.
6. Continue in this pattern until you have completed the desired number of repetitions.

Performance tips:

1. Do not attempt to lower your legs to the 45-degree starting position until you have tightened your abdominal muscles.
2. Keep your abdominals tight to maintain balance and control all throughout the exercise.
3. If you feel your lower back arching off the floor, take a rest. This means your muscles are fatigued.
4. Beginner level. To modify this exercise, keep your legs directly over your hips at the starting position. Lower your legs one by one to the 45-degree position.
5. If this bothers your knees/back in any way, don't do the exercise.
6. Variation: Switch legs a little faster.
Repetitions:
Eight to 10 repetitions